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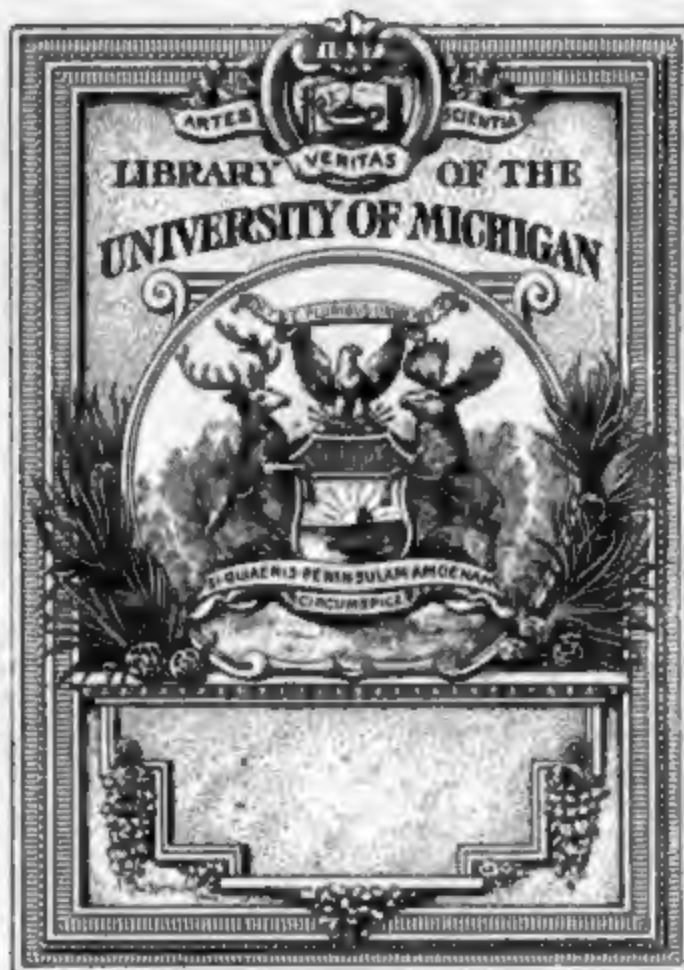
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THE MORAL IDEAL



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THE MORAL IDEAL

THE MORAL IDEAL

A HISTORIC STUDY

BY

JULIA WEDGWOOD

ὁ δὲ Θεὸς ἡμῖν πάντων χρημάτων μέτρον εἶη μάλιστα, καὶ πολὺ μᾶλλον
ἢ πού τις, ὥς φασιν, ἄνθρωπος

PLATO, *Leges*

NEW AND REVISED EDITION

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DEDICATION OF THE FIRST EDITION

TO AN OLD FRIEND

THE following pages, little as they justify such a description, represent the thoughts and endeavours of more than twenty years. When, after so long an effort, we have reached a stage where we are forced to recognise, with however little satisfaction to ourselves, that something is concluded which must stand as the goal of endeavour, and take its chance as a chapter of achievement, we look around for some sympathising spectator of our work, some criticism tinged with the desire to approve. You will not wonder that at such a moment I turn to an old friend; you will recognise it as natural that I should address words meant for the public, in the first instance, to you.

The title I have chosen, though I can find none better, does not cover the ground I have sought to explore. I should better have described my aim had I called the book a *History of Human Aspiration*; but while such a title would have seemed an ironic introduction to any volume of its size and informal character, the sketches which follow cannot be called a *History* of anything. To an ordinary reader, the mere list of headings will suggest the débris of a gigantic scheme, without a centre and without a scale, begun at intervals here and there and abandoned as often.

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The review of human thought which lingers over the utterance of an individual, or quits all limitation of race and nation to describe the feelings of an age and the speculations roused by a dawning faith, may well be thought, in its neglect of all obvious method, to embody the mere fancies of a dreamer. I am not afraid that it will bear that aspect to you. In the execution of my design you will certainly find much failure and probably some blunders, while you will look in vain for a suggestion or an idea not already familiar to you; but you will not be offended by the apparent desultoriness of the scheme. Where the space given to description keeps a common measure with the period of time described, there, we may be sure, but little of the inner life is revealed to the reader. In the perspective of an individual memory, years dwindle to a point, and moments expand to an age. A true biography, were such a one possible, would measure its progress by some other standard than the dates which mark advance from the cradle to the tomb; and the historian can hardly more than the biographer afford to forget that, as it has been finely said, "God has so arranged the chronometry of our spirits that there shall be thousands of silent moments between the striking hours." The criticism that the writer of a moral history follows no obvious scale and respects no obvious limits is in fact a recognition that he has ignored all that would shackle him in recording those throbs and pulsations which make up the true life of Man.

The true life of Man! there you at least will be with me. In asserting that the history of aspiration is the clue to all history, I shall not appear to you to make any extravagant

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claim for the Unseen. You believe, even more firmly than I do, that a partial and incomplete revelation of what men have sought to be, tells us more of their true nature than does the most exhaustive record possible of what they have accomplished. "The word outlasts the deed," says a singer who saw the greatest deeds of Greece. The member of a less vocal race may expand that saying; the thought outlasts the word. Aspiration exceeds utterance, as utterance exceeds achievement. The endeavour to illustrate this truth for those who believe it, to set beside the picture of human action the suggestion of those feelings in which it finds its spring—this is an aim in which I have no doubt of your approval. As I lay down the pen, I find that conviction enough for me; and although your sympathy perchance be given rather to the worker than the work, I know that if you can care for what I have written, sooner or later one or two others will feel its meaning, and enter into the vast consolation and hope bound up in the thoughts I have striven to follow, and the convictions which they have strengthened, deepened, and purified.

NOTICE

THE present edition of this book is an enlarged form of that published twenty years ago, with the addition of a chapter on Egypt, and much increase to almost all the rest. No view of mine is changed since I wrote first, but a good deal of what was unhelpful to the meaning is left out; while any fresh material known to me has been carefully considered and mostly embodied, so that the result is practically a new book.

I should like to take this opportunity of thanking many helpers, named and unnamed, the latter including some of the dearest. Among the former I would mention as my greatest helper in the original work, Mary Everest Boole; while the present edition owes more than I can say to two who have put aside their own work to help mine—Edward Morgan Forster and Charles Harold Herford.

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THE MORAL IDEAL

CHAPTER I

EGYPT THE EARLIEST NATION

THE student of ideals should beware of despising the study of nomenclature. A name is something more than a sign-post; the terms expressive of the moral life influence as well as reveal the course of moral development. An argument may be condensed into an epithet; the word un-English, for example, although no one would deliberately maintain that our countrymen are distinguished from others by a practice of all the virtues, is hardly ever used except in an unfavourable sense. Doubtless the habit of stamping every word with praise or blame encourages prejudice; it would be easy to mention many epithets of which the force is blunted for description by their habitual use as eulogy or as condemnation. Still it would be a vain endeavour to drain away all moral association from words not primarily moral. Would any one give a merely neutral content to the word *Nation*? Strictly speaking it denotes no more than a particular group of human beings, good, bad, and indifferent. It is almost synonymous with the word Country. We hardly remember that the one word belongs to history and the other to geography; in common parlance the only difference between them is that the word *nation* is the more grandiloquent and the less poetic of the two. Yet with the slight change we enter or quit the realm of moral

Sanctity in
the idea of
a Nation.

association. The frequent quotation of Burke's supposed statement that it is not possible to bring an indictment against a nation¹ shows that a vague popular reverence, not accorded to all corporate names (nobody would say that it is impossible to bring an indictment against a class or a party), attaches to the idea. Men are bad or good, but nations, in some sense, are supposed to be good. The life of a nation is felt by all to be more sacred than the life of an individual; all men are mortal; all nations, it is assumed, should be immortal. The lives of men are sacrificed without hesitation or remorse on the scaffold, or on the battlefield, for a sufficient national object; but an attempt to destroy a national life is stigmatised as a national crime.

what is
tion?

Yet it cannot be said that the meaning of the word is uncontrovertibly clear. England means something more than the collective inhabitants of a particular island, something less than the collective subjects of a particular government. It never weighed with Wellington that he was an Irishman, and the significance of his indifference is independent of its righteousness. On the other hand, we do not call either a Hindoo or an Australian an Englishman, though the first may be a subject of the English monarch with no independent government of his own, while the second speaks our language and cordially accepts our dominion. The difficulty of deciding the exact limits of our own nation is not merely literary. The course of history would be clearer, even the course of political life easier, if the name of a nation were as definite as the name of a man. We need not go beyond the memories of the young to exhibit the disastrous influence of this ambiguity; the most embittered controversy of the late nineteenth century turned on the question whether our united kingdom consists of one nation divided by geography or of two nations held together by government. The ques-

¹ In his speech on conciliation with America. Given here as it is generally quoted. What he actually said was: "I do not know the method of drawing up an indictment against a whole people."

tion, however it be answered, both shows that a common government does not necessarily make a nation, and goes some way towards showing that a double government necessarily unmakes a nation. Two races may form one nation; but one race, divided in its government, loses its ideal unity. It is to recognise this distinction that the word *nationality* has attained its present significance as a claimant for international recognition, and the change forcibly illustrates the tendency of words to epitomise argument, for it is the declaration of a particular theory as much as the label of a particular fact. It implies that the desire of a race, apart from its power to assume the national responsibility of self-defence, constitutes a claim to national unity. The word,¹ first thus used in a time which saw two great nations attain their integrity, commemorates a strengthened sympathy with nascent, and a weakened respect for established political organisation, which is perhaps a natural result of the fact that national feeling is strongest as an aspiration. The interval between the ideal Italy glimmering before the eye of Dante and its tardy realisation in the kingdom of Victor Emmanuel measures the slow growth of a Nation. In the narrower and more exact sense of the word it is hardly present to the attention of the classical historian or the student of the Old Testament, although classical and scriptural aspiration after national life represent a loftier ideal than we find realised in modern Europe. The orators of Greece, the prophets of Israel, have recorded a race's yearnings after unity, but neither the Hellenic nor the Hebrew people formed a nation. Greece was one only in the sense that Europe is one. It embodied contrasts no less distinct than those which separate our country from its continental neighbours. England and France, indeed, are

¹ I believe "nationality" was never used in the modern sense of an inchoate nation before the changes brought about by the revolutions of 1848. Before that it was only as one might say that one could tell the nationality of a person who spoke French with a German accent.

hardly as different as Athens and Sparta.¹ The wonderful people who called the rest of the world barbarians, and might all have been lodged in London, were never what we mean by a nation. Hellenic union was a vivid dream, recorded in immortal eloquence, but the waking reality, when all is told, was a merely provincial life. The only ancient race equally dominant in modern ideas had a development strikingly similar. The Hebrew, like the Hellenic race, which in other respects it so little resembles, embodied a similar dualism, yearned after a similar unity, and became a fragment of the same all-embracing empire. The aspiration so vivid in feeling, so eloquent in expression, was in neither case realised in fact.

It is a product of the modern world.

A nation begins to exist whenever a race comes of age. The varying limits of youth and maturity are recognised to a certain small extent, even for individuals; a monarch does not await his twenty-first birthday. Far more does the period of a nation's majority vary; the race may last for ages undeveloped into a nation; the nation may arise at an early period in the life of the race. Still on the whole the twenty-one years which make the babe a man have their analogue in national development. In dealing with that early period which we should more rightly call the young than the old world, History speaks rarely of nations;² in proportion as she approaches our own day she speaks mainly of nations. The modern historian narrates the conquests of England, the revolutions of France; he rejoices in the deliverance of Italy,

¹ See for instance the speech of the Corinthians at the Congress of Sparta of 432 B.C. (Thucydides, i 70). The contrast, as they describe it, would be felt extravagant in any comparison of Englishmen and Frenchmen.

² That is, in what is here regarded as the strict sense of the word; in a vague general sense, as a synonym for *race*, it is common enough, and in Latin is often used in a somewhat contemptuous sense, as "tribe" with us. The distinction between nation and race seems to me well given in a letter to the *Times* (July 30, 1901) by Professor Waldstein, of King's College, Cambridge. "The chief cause of most international errors and complications," he considers, is just this confusion of race with nation. "A nation in all adequate modern conception of the term is ultimately based upon community of political ideas, institutions, and ideals."

he laments over the partition of Poland. When we turn back to ancient history, we are absorbed in the fate of cities; we hear of the fall of Jerusalem, the rivalry of Athens and Sparta, the victory of Syracuse, the expanding dominion of Rome. Almost the only country of which we take cognisance is the enemy of all freedom, the great but weak empire of Persia. To a Greek it must have seemed impossible that freedom should ever belong to a country, we may say indeed that it is impossible for the quality he meant by freedom to attach to the thing we mean by a country. The ideal of corporate life has changed, and the object of common desire cannot remain identical.

The group visible to the eye of History is at first a wandering race, then a selection from a single race finding its centre ordinarily¹ within fortified walls, and united by common legislation, last of all (as far as our present experience goes) a race, or mixture of races, dwelling within the limits of a definite territory, under a common authority which claims the allegiance of every inhabitant and accords to all its impartial protection. It is the middle term of this evolution which has most deeply impressed our political and historical dialect. It is not the longest; already the State has been much longer established in a country than it ever was in a city; but the coincidence of city life with the sudden effulgence of genius has associated, for ever as far as we can see, the ideas of the political with the terms of city life. The view that the city is the State survives in our whole political dialect and domineers over all nomenclature referring to corporate action. When we speak of the rights and duties of the citizen, we say, though we do not mean, that political life is the life of a town, nay the theory has left its stamp on a dialect even broader than that of politics. In translating Augustine's *Civitas Dei* as "The City of God" we do homage to a view which arose

For Anti-
quity the
unit was
the City.

¹ The qualification is made necessary by the important exception of Sparta, which had no walls till a late period in its history.

when stable union was associated with encircling walls and a central citadel; and the translator who should endeavour to discover some rendering less inapplicable to human yearnings after an eternal home would discover that the political ideas of the classical world were still too tyrannical for him, and that he had no choice between some word quite in a wrong key or by this surprising but natural reminiscence of Jerusalem and Rome.

The Nation
collects, the
City selects,
its consti-
tuents.

We must not minimise the distinction by saying, as if it were the whole truth, that there were few people in the world then and many people in the world now, and that States in consequence were small and are great. No doubt a country is a large place and a city is a comparatively small place, but the question of size does not convey the whole difference between them. Or rather, perhaps, the question of size has bearings often overlooked. A question of degree may amount to a question of kind; quantity, above a certain point, means quality. All would concede that a homogeneous group might be too small to be spoken of as a nation; the greatest political thinker who ever lived supposed that it might be too large. Aristotle occupies many lines of his *Politics* with the dangers of a State over the wide extent of which, as he puts it, the government of God alone could extend.¹ And his conception of a City State differs from our conception of a Nation in other respects than that of mere size. The functions of the artizan and the citizen, he implies, are mutually exclusive, an attitude impossible for one who contemplates a Nation. It is not so much that our view is higher, or more humane; it is not only that sympathy has widened since the fourth century before Christ. It is that Aristotle's view is inapplicable to the inhabitants of a country. A city was in fact in some sense a class. The ideal citizen must not work for his living, but of course many persons living in the city must work for theirs, and for his also. The city chose out from

¹ Aristotle, *Politics*, 1326a.

a particular spot a particular set of men, and regarded these as her subjects in the true sense of the word, others being more or less their slaves. A nation knows no such personal distinctions; it is defined by the outline of the soil it occupies. No doubt there are such beings as resident aliens in England, but we may almost ignore their distinction from naturalised English subjects when we compare them with aliens in Athens. The law accords its protection impartially to them and to its proper subjects. The modern State is a more geographical conception than the ancient one. It is much less personal than that was; perhaps we might say it is less spiritual. It does not select its subjects, but comprehends all who live on a particular soil; it can only exist where there is a stable population, and hence in the beginning of history a nation is an idea rarely entertained and almost never embodied in actual territorial existence.

Almost, not quite; for the curtain of History rises on one people which, whatever test we apply, we must recognise as a Nation. A settled government, a definite territory, a common language and religion, these things existed in the valley of the Nile for ages before the name of Greece or Rome was known to mankind. Egypt contains great cities but depends on none of them; its centre and soul is the great river whose rising and falling tides mark out its territory more definitely than impregnable walls, presenting an island of unsurpassed fertility in a surrounding expanse of desert. Here we have a realm which enforces union on its inhabitants as in Greece we have a realm which enforces separation on them. The idea of unity is presented by the mighty river which has created Egypt as it is not presented by any other portion of our planet. No other name of a country opens so long a vista; no other, applicable to a resort of twentieth century tourists, is also applicable to a kingdom on which history dawns. The Hebrew Patriarch receives a lesson in righteousness from an Egyptian monarch

Egypt, the
single
ancient
nation

before the existence of the Hebrew tribe;¹ the earliest Athenian statesman listens as a pupil to an Egyptian priest who speaks as the representative of an elder world. Abraham and Solon alike find a teacher on Egyptian soil. We cannot thus measure the remoteness of any but Egyptian civilisation; if any other be equally distant the backward road presents no similar landmark. No record of Chinese or Indian activity falls into line with the hope of Israel or the glory of Greece. No revelation of the spade and the mattock can antedate the primacy thus secured to the land that saw the birth of Moses and the pilgrimages of Solon and Herodotus. Egypt was a resort of tourists in the time of the first great Athenian known to the modern world; the land of far memories was as attractive at the beginning of authentic history as in its maturity.² "Each day grow older and learn something new" was the motto of Solon's old age,³ and surely not less of his youth; and we may discover in the precept the aim of the traveller no less than that of the student. Egypt was the hoary teacher naturally sought by the ardent learner. The figure of the legendary sage and statesman wandering amid the marshes and cities of the Delta, conferring with Egyptian priests, and bringing out the antiquities of Greece to find them scorned as things of yesterday—this striking image is to the historian what the planet seen against the constellation is to the astronomer. The star which for the ignorant spectator melts into unity with that bright cluster, measures a vast intervening distance to the enlightened vision of the astronomer. Solon, long as he lived before Marathon and Salamis, before Æschylus and Socrates, yet in comparison with all that this background implies, belongs to the modern

¹ Gen. xii. 18-19. Compare the doublet in xx. 9, where, however, the king is not Egyptian.

² Strabo (i. 2, 22), in defending Homer from the charge of ignorance, oddly brought against him by Eratosthenes, says that he (Homer) did not give a particular description of the Nile because he thought it too well known.

³ Plutarch's *Lives*. Solon 2.

world. Rome is as yet hardly more than a village, Athens still lacks her immortal halo of art and poetry, but Egypt is already, and we may say for ever, the land of the past.

This distinction is symbolised in what may be called a parable, destined to the immortality of all that is found on the page of Plato.¹ The goddess worshipped at Sais, we are told, was identified with the goddess who had given her name to Athens, and the two cities appear to have owned some sort of bond. As an Athenian Solon would thus receive a warm welcome from its inhabitants, and the legend which he brings home from his sojourn on the banks of the Nile is one of which Athens is the centre. In his discourse with an Egyptian priest he appears anxious to make the most of the antiquity of his city, but his account of "Phoroneus called the First, and Niobe and Deucalion" is swept aside as a mere story of modern life. "O Solon, Solon," an aged priest interrupts him, "the Greeks are but children." "What do you mean?" asks Solon, we may suppose rather indignantly, for youth had not in those young days the charm it has in ours. "You have," pursues the Egyptian, "the minds of children. No traditional belief, no hoary learning exists with you." But he goes on to vindicate for the primæval Athens an antiquity compared with which that of Homer and Hesiod is as yesterday. Nine millenniums, he says, separate the city of Solon from the first city of Athens, the inhabitants of which, though they perished in some cataclysm of the early world, had left an example of heroic resistance to overwhelming power such as no later civilisation could transcend. A great Empire was repelled by the primæval Athenians—a vast continent lying beyond the Pillars of Hercules sent its forces in vain against the small city. Victors and vanquished survived the conflict but a moment; the vast Atlantis, the minute Athens, were engulfed in the same flood. Nature, as it were jealous of

Egypt,
a supposed
survival
from the
antedilu-
vian world.

¹ Plato, *Timæus*, 21-25.

human achievement, dropped her curtain on the stage, permitting no record of a war far greater than that of Troy to survive save in the records of Egypt, here represented as the historiographer of the human race. Some fugitives from Atlantis and from Athens brought the tale to the Delta, and the Egyptian priest who narrated it to Solon did but restore to him the bequest of his unknown compatriots. The narration so impressed him (we follow throughout the account of Critias in the *Timæus*) that he aimed at becoming the Homer of this primæval Iliad, and would have succeeded but for the summons from his troublesome fellow-townsmen to undertake the government of their city. The poem he is said to have begun is mentioned only by Plato, and is probably the creation of his fancy. The informant of Solon may be bracketed with that Raphael Hythlodæ who gave Sir Thomas More the account of Utopia, or with the mariner sailing from Peru to whom Bacon owed the account of the new Atlantis. The ideal Republic is a theme of unfailing interest, and never do we find its associations more august than when it presents to us the first great legislator of Athens, and the greatest philosopher who ever lived.

any rate
er than
story.

Whatever we may think of Solon's travels in Egypt and the existence of a vanished continent in the Atlantic, this story in the *Timæus* may be accepted as a grandiose declaration of the fact that Egypt is the most ancient nation in the world. Its growth was fostered by a deeply rooted conservatism. Its inhabitants were preserved not only from the disasters of flood or flame, but also from the political cataclysms which interrupt and delay the peaceful development of a nation. To the eyes of the turbulent Greek Egypt was, with the impressiveness of a special contrast, the home of immemorial tradition. Its curtain rises on the vista of a long past. Its history, if we may take Herodotus as our historian, begins with an enormous engineering feat; its first king, in the tradition he preserves, changes the course of the

Nile.¹ An early dynasty constructs the mightiest buildings in the world. Nothing Egyptian is inchoate. In the art of any other country we should have no difficulty in arranging its objects chronologically by mere inspection. It would be enough to see that the execution was rude to enable us to judge that the date was early. In the case of Egypt such an inference might invert the truth. We know nothing in Egyptian sculpture so admirable as some of the productions of the old empire.² It is impossible that Art could have started with such perfection. The history, as the river, of Egypt, reveals by no shrinkage the approach to its source. Its vista opens into myth and legend, but never into barbarism. The mystery which for ages hung over the source of its river, has never been removed from the origin of the race dwelling beside it. Far away in the dimness of the past that stream takes its rise; what we confront from the first is a "united kingdom." How modern are all the associations called up by those words! In truth Egypt is as much the most modern as the most ancient of nations; the two statements are different ways of expressing the same fact. To say that a country is the most ancient in the world is to say that it reached its maturity at an early epoch; the longer a State has been in existence the nearer it must come to a modern standard. Egypt had reached the third stage of national development³ long before the other races of the old world had reached the second. She was a nation while the races which were to create Athens and Sparta were wanderers. Perhaps we may best bring home to our minds the stability of her dominion by reminding ourselves that her history is reckoned by dynasties. At a period when

¹ Herodotus, ii. 19. "We can," says the latest, and surely the classic historian of Egypt, somewhat to his reader's surprise, "easily credit the narrative" (*A History of Egypt from the Earliest Times to the Persian Conquest*, by James Henry Breasted, Ph.D., 1906).

² As for instance the so called Sheikh el Beled, the sitting scribe in the Louvre, and the diorite statue of Khephren.

³ See above, p. 5. The second stage, that of city life, covering all known to us as classic literature, dates from a late period of Egyptian history.

settled government was elsewhere unknown, Egypt had been ruled for ages by a succession of royal families. In that fact we gather up a record of unbroken national unity such as we cannot as yet parallel from any other country in the world.

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The peculiarities of the scenery which gave scope for this early development had attracted Greek attention almost as soon as that development itself; the great and mysterious river roused an interest not claimed by any other natural phenomenon. When Herodotus, quoting from an earlier writer,¹ calls Egypt the gift of the Nile, he sums up the influences which dominated its industrial and spiritual life. As we read we see the broad life-giving stream with its margin of verdure, its frame of desert; we feel the contrast of narrow life and encroaching death; the aggressive desert, the sand, as a modern Egyptologist² expresses it, "trying to trickle down" through the wall of rock into the hardly won, arduously defended strip of tillage. The foreboding of Greek disaster, expressed to Herodotus³ by Egyptians who learnt, apparently for the first time, that Greece depended upon rain for irrigation, shows that the Nile was a faithful fellow-worker on the whole. The country which two millenniums have left almost unchanged exhibits striking changes within a few months. Those emerald fields, that amber sand, the faint amethyst wall of distant or approaching cliffs, that broad expanse of waters—all must have looked much the same to its earliest as to its latest tourist, and man's achievement in the landscape is hardly more altered than Nature's background. To the eye of Herodotus as to that of the latest tourist did Nile reflect "the endless length of dark red colonnades."⁴ But while travellers who visit Egypt at

¹ *I.e.* Hecataeus of Miletus, a historian known only in fragments. Both he and Herodotus (ii. 5) probably took the expression from Egyptian sources.

² Adolf Erman, *Life in Egypt*, translated by H. M. Tirard, 1894 (p. 8).

³ Herodotus, ii. 13.

⁴ Macaulay, *Prophecy of Cypria*.

an interval of three thousand years might leave identical descriptions, those who visit it at the interval of six months might seem to be describing different countries. The Egypt known to winter visitants differs strikingly from the miniature archipelago with the villages as islands which forms the Egypt of the inundation. A modern Egyptologist—M. Lefébure—translates the description which we have unawares taken from Herodotus into imagery more graphic to the tourist of our day. Egypt, he says, is an "intermittent Venice." The title is no less accurate than picturesque. The scorching summer, which elsewhere brings parched fields and withered vegetation, bathes Egypt in sweet waters hiding the fields which they both moisten and fertilise. In no other country did man find Nature so sympathetic a fellow-worker—sympathetic and exacting at once, for those life-giving waters needed the co-operation of man for their beneficent office, and preached with a unique eloquence the duty and the promise attendant on the gospel of work.

That gospel is set forth in the life of Egypt in all its strength and in all its weakness. We cannot combine the virtues of the worker and the dreamer. The life of agriculture is indeed a poetic object for the poet and the artist, but we must turn to a "land of dark heath and shaggy wood," a land where Nature guards a peculiar domain for herself, to find a "meet nurse for a poetic child." To be alone with Nature is not possible in Egypt. The trace of human labour is everywhere. In spite of the great fertility of its soil, no country has so poor a variety of plants,¹ every spot of earth being either deprived of water or forced to bear crops; the wanderer by the Nile can rarely pluck a bunch of wild flowers. The landscape is monotonous; irrigated meadows, limestone rocks, the broad river, the graceful palm-groves—these few impressive elements make up the whole scenery of the land. The only approach to

Yet rather
the land of
prosaic
invention
than of
history.

¹ Erman, p. 11 seq.

wild country in ancient Egypt was to be found in the marshes of the Delta, a vanishing realm as the progress of cultivation reclaimed the land for agriculture; and the life of the marshes seems to have taken for the Egyptian the place which the life of the forest occupies in Teutonic folklore. This small and dwindling relic of primæval wildness stood out against a background of elaborate civilisation which excluded the scenery of romance and forbade leisure for dreams. We may indeed find more than one of our nursery tales in Egypt; the "rosy cheeked maiden" who loses her slipper and gains a prince for her husband¹ must surely be a relation of Cinderella; but here the romance is strangely impaired, the preliminary meeting of youth and maiden being altogether lost. An eagle carries off the sandal as Rhodopis is bathing, and the prince before whom it is dropped, fascinated by its beauty and the strangeness of its appearance, causes a search to be made for its wearer, after which the story ends as in our nursery tale. But the loss of its opening scene and the whole stress being thereby thrown upon the slipper itself is a touch very characteristic of the prosaic materialism of Egypt. Perhaps even such romance as we find in it may be partly due to its Greek reporter. In purely Egyptian story, romance loses itself in grotesque detail. It is not fanciful to connect this limitation with the landscape meeting the eyes of every Egyptian. A narrow strip of fertile land walled in by limestone cliffs, knowing no coast, no wild moor or forest, everywhere cultivated till it meets the desert, is no theatre for fancy's bright creations, or imagination's mystic suggestions. Egypt is thus in all its literature the land of prose. And yet it is not the land of history. No claim for Egypt is more baseless than that which we have seen recorded by Plato, to be the

¹ Strabo, xvii. 1, 33 (p. 1146). She is by some called Doriche, and Rhodopis, the name Strabo gives her, is evidently a mere epithet. Herodotus, ii. 134, says she was a Thracian living under Amasis. Her legendary importance may be measured by the story (which the historian takes the trouble to confute) that she built one of the Pyramids.

historiographer of the human race. A modern historian of Egypt¹ goes so far as to say that the Egyptians had no more historic interest than any scribbler who cuts his name on the pedestal of a statue; many inscriptions give us no more real information than the record that John Smith has defaced a noble monument. Indeed some give us even less, for they antedate their actual period and make unfounded pretensions to antiquity, so that their meagre information is also false. No history of Egypt appears to have been undertaken till Egypt had become Greek,² more than three and a half millenniums after an Egyptian king built the Pyramids. A people of writers cared not to record the life of their country. Surely the sense of a national life must have been absent, where, as we are told,³ one king simply erases in an inscription the name of a predecessor and substitutes his own. History, it seems, springs from that sense of national existence which is hardly possible where national existence has known no twilight. In truth no intellectual creation, more than history, demands the exercise of imagination, and in imagination Egypt was hopelessly and absolutely deficient. Till we have made a place in our minds for all that this implies—and it implies more than we are apt to suppose—we cannot appreciate an ideal which with all its limitations comes in some important respects nearer to Christianity than that of any other people of the ancient world.

Egypt is of necessity the land of industry. Hard work in the valley of the Nile is a condition of existence; that strip of fertile land between two deserts yields its treasures with boundless liberality at the price of unremitting toil, but only at this price.⁴ Wherever the laborious Egyptian

Agriculture
gives
Egyptian
life its
keynote

¹ Dr. Alfred Wiedemann, *Geschichte Ägypten's von Psammetichus bis Alexander*.

² By Manetho, an Egyptian priest who lived under the first Ptolemy, and whose history of Egypt, quoted by Josephus (*contra Apion*, i. 44), is known to us only by such citations.

³ Ramses II. thus attributed to himself the conquests of an elder Queen Ramaka. Wiedemann, pp. 14-16.

⁴ See Erman, p. 13.

system of irrigation is suffered to fall into decay the Desert encroaches on the cornfields, and the true limits of the land suffer a more grievous restriction than that which could be imposed by hostile armies. But work in Egypt had unique encouragement and reward. It is not sustained exertion which disheartens the worker, it is recurrent disappointment. The steadfast rhythm of those rising and falling waters provides at once the claim and the aid which evokes the spirit of exertion. For a proof of the response in the spirit of man to the summons of Nature we may turn to a volume the representative value of which, in reference to Egypt, none will question. Of all the records of the past nothing is more characteristic of Egyptian life and thought than the *Book of the Dead*. Its very title is expressive. The people whose grandest buildings are tombs, who have preserved from decay and bequeathed to the modern world the actual bodies of their distinguished men; the people whose whole life appears as a meditation on death, and for whom, nevertheless, the world beyond the grave seems a mere prolongation of this one—such a people finds its best illustrations in the series of funeral liturgies (so we may describe the collection making up the volume) which records the anticipations and hopes of the world beyond the tomb. The literature of the whole world could hardly supply another volume so unequal. Some passages more recall the direct teaching of Christ than any other fragment of ancient literature, not excepting the Old Testament; while others must be described as mere rubbish. But the very inequalities of the book render it a better illustration of the life of its writers and readers than a homogeneous work would be. Egyptian conservatism makes no selection. Thought, religion, culture, all becomes what we may call agglutinative; everything is preserved—"gold, hay, wood, precious stones;" and the work is never tried by fire. The worthless and the precious are preserved side by side, to the great obscuring of the latter. From this unexpected source,

dealing as it does with matters remote from what we should have thought any possible allusion to agriculture, we may receive a vivid impression of respect for the toil of the husbandman. "Let me go forward on my journey, and let me plough,"¹ is the prayer of the soul confronting the life beyond the grave. "I am at peace in the divine city, and I know the waters, cities, nomes" (*i.e.* provinces), "and lakes which are in Sekhet-Hetep."² I am strong therein, I sow seed therein, I reap the harvest therein, I plough therein." The papyrus from which the above sentence is an extract, contains a picture of the actual progress of an Egyptian through these "fields of peace"³ (the literal translation of Sekhet-Hetep). We see him reaping wheat of which the ears are on a level with his own head, and driving in oxen afterwards who "tread out the corn," while lower down on the page he has harnessed these oxen to the plough and presses down the share behind them, by the side of a canal. To Ani, the particular Egyptian here granted participation in this divine agriculture, it is no continuation of the pursuits of his earth life. He had in his mortal career exercised the profession of a secretary, but we have no prayer that he may transcribe celestial thoughts, and form the channel of some inspired writer for attentive readers. He prays that he may carry on in Heaven the work of the ordinary peasant, the labour which was commemorated in no stately erection, which knew no permanent memorial, which affords no variety, no room for individual originality, which has always to be beginning over again. The work itself was no object of desire to him, quite the contrary. Egyptian magic was called on to provide, in the Ushabti figures so familiar to the traveller of to-day, an ideal substitute in this arduous toil. But that sense of the abiding importance of agriculture which was impressed on the Egyptian by the

¹ *Book of the Dead*, translated into English by Dr. E. A. Wallis Budge, with the original text, 1898, chap. cx. p. 174.

² The Egyptian Elysian fields.

³ Given by Budge, p. 170; described, p. 171.

whole scenery and the periodic changes of his native land extended beyond the realm of mortal endeavour and impressed itself on the images formed by him of the interests and pursuits of Eternity.

and
moulds its
ideal,

In learning that a people accords a high place to industry we acquire knowledge of much more than its industrial life. The virtues are associates, but not impartial associates; where we find one we do not find all, sometimes not even all we expect. But the cluster centering in industry is a permanent and kindred group. Specially is this true of the industry that is concerned with the soil. It is a significant fact that the very designation by which we usually point out the agricultural worker implies that his is "labour" par excellence; the distinction of the "labourer" and the "artisan" is no mere accident, but a fundamental division, indicating separate kinds of effort, separate groups of mental and spiritual activities. The "labourer" impresses his work with no stamp of individuality, he is the creator of nothing that can arrest attention by itself. He merely prepares the soil for the influences of Nature; when these have their way, he has done his work. His whole aim is to get the seed and water to the ground; he produces nothing; the seed grows without his aid if it happens to be there. His work seems to stand nearer than any other to invisible power, not man's own, and the language of parable impresses on every reader the significance not only of what agriculture achieves, but of what it suggests. Read the "proverbial poem," as Professor Cheyne calls it, of a late Hebrew writer.¹ "Give ye ear, and hear my voice, hearken and hear my speech. Doth the ploughman plough continually to sow? Doth he continually open and break the clods of his ground? When he hath made plain the face thereof doth he not

¹ Isaiah xxviii. 23 in Polychrome Bible, pp. 28 and 154. An insertion of the latest editor according to Dr. Cheyne, who adds, "These ancient rules of husbandry are applications of eternal principles."

cast abroad the fitches and scatter the cummin, and put in the wheat in rows and the barley in the appointed place, and the spelt in the border thereof? For his God doth instruct him aright and doth teach him." The Hebrew sense of the processes of Nature, of the succession of the seasons, the maturing of the seed within the bosom of earth as specially a Divine manifestation, becomes in the mind of the teacher identified with the lesson of encouragement he sought to impart. The aim of the "Master of the harvest," he urges, is the opening of the seed; the crushing and bruising of the clods which should receive it is a mere preliminary to his real work. "Know ye not this parable,"¹ asked another teacher when he had put it before his disciples in a rather different form, "and how then will ye know all parables?" as if this were the clue to all. "En cultivant la terre, on se cultive," says a modern writer on Egypt. Strange to think of the teacher whose lesson M. About unconsciously echoes! The cultivation of the soil cultivates much besides—it moulds ideals, implants aspirations, creates permanent tendencies. It gives, where it is the predominant industry, to the character of a people its moral stamp.

Industry, occupied with the soil, tends to implant a habit of submission. It is of no avail to resent any conditions of agriculture. The winter will pass; if the drought do not pass, there is still nothing for it but to wait. If we have a low Nile this season we must wait for the next. The habit of accepting hard and unfavourable conditions and making the best of them, expands beyond the business in which it originated. Perhaps we may regard the Pyramids as testimony to the force of such a habit. It is not the view of the latest historians that the Pyramid builders were cruel tyrants, but those wonderful monuments, no one can deny, testify to a widespread habit of obedience. The culture of the soil prepared the qualities which fitted the

inculcating
obedience
on the
subject

¹ Mark iv. 13

Egyptians to erect the greatest monuments in the world. Wherever the main work of a people leads to attentive and responsive observance of the course of the seasons, a certain rhythm of dutiful exertion is impressed on the whole of life. There the historian will find no stirring changes to chronicle, no bold experiments to observe. It is significant of the ideal of Agriculture that the only personage in Egyptian history known as a Reformer is also a Monarch. The short-lived recoil from Egyptian superstition which closed the eighteenth dynasty, and seems to have aimed at a pure monotheism symbolised by the sun's disk, was led by Amenophis IV. It is a significant fact in Egyptian history that its Luther occupied a throne. Its Protestantism was brief and external. The words given by Plato as those of an Egyptian priest¹ gain in meaning as we follow the history of his race. Egypt is no home of revolution. Its people realise the ideal which a conservative ruler desired to revive at the start of the Roman empire, and which a great poet has enshrined in his verse. The life that Augustus tried to organise, and Virgil painted in his few immortal strokes—the picture

“ Of patient working, little craving men,
Gods worshipped, sires revered ”²—

this is renewed, wherever men accept agriculture as a fundamental and all-pervading necessity. The claim of the parent has a certain connection with the claim of the soil. The precept, “Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land,” is not a promise of supernatural reward to a particular kind of virtue, but the enunciation of a moral law. Where the parent is not honoured, posterity misses its true inheritance; where the generations are not joined by gratitude and obedience they

¹ See above, p. 9.

² *Et patiens operum parvoque assueta Juventus
Sacra Deum, sanctique parentes* (Georg. ii. 472).
The translation is Dr. Kennedy's.

form but a rope of sand. Reverence for the past is inseparably joined to a stable hope for the future. No other pursuit preaches this lesson as practically as agriculture. The home, the family, the mutual bonds of youth and age—that life of correlated right and duty which binds man to the past—all this is in some sense linked with the labour of the cornfield and the farm. We see it in our own time; the country life, now fading, is the home of all conservative virtue, and we may still turn to remote villages and lonely farms for the family union that has elsewhere given way to individual development, a broader horizon, and a slighter link with the past. Where the mere plot of earth supplies a common interest the family is a unity as it cannot otherwise be a unity, unless the visible bond be replaced by lofty aims and spiritual tenderness. Long before Moses quitted Egypt, nay long before Abraham entered Egypt, the lesson of the fifth commandment was preached there. The so-called “oldest book in the world,” the Papyrus Prisse,¹ expresses a sense of value in family relation which we might imagine the distinctive mark of a late era in national life. “God loves obedience and hates disobedience,” writes Ptah Hotep, the sage who here speaks to us across the chasm of millenniums. “An obedient son shall be a prosperous father.” Obedience is no hard unnatural effort, but the moral exercise which gives life its meaning; “obedience is joy,” “obedience gives life to the heart.” The writer recognises the seeming paradox in his words. “That which the wise know to be death,” he concedes, “seems as life to the rebel.” The bonds of the family, the writer seems to urge, are barriers against all that is the foe of life. He dwells most on those which unite father and son, but the claims of the wife are not forgotten. “Cherish thy spouse, be liberal in her personal adornment.” The quaint phrase makes monogamy clear as a starting point for Egypt. We

¹ M. de Rougé gave this title to a Papyrus published in 1847 by M. Prisse d'Avennes. It is a work something like the Hebrew Proverbs.

see as an aim, that group of domestic pieties which the Teutonic languages suggest in the word *Home*.

and pro-
tection on
the ruler.

The ideal is no one-sided standard, applicable only to the son and the subject, and leaving authority uninfluenced. Where industry is honoured, the ideal of government is that of a guardian. It is difficult to bring home to the reader that this was a living influence in Egypt; the Greek and Hebrew view both oppose themselves to such a representation. The stories of Herodotus, the narrative of Exodus, alike lead us to images of tyranny, vividly illustrated as they are by the sculptures of a conquering monarch gathering the heads of his enemies together in order to slay them at a single blow, and by graphic delineations of blows inflicted on the helpless. Yet the Book of Genesis records an instance of Egyptian mercy in punishment for which before a late period in modern history we should in vain seek a parallel. A slave is supposed to have outraged his mistress.¹ We must of course imagine the crime established to the satisfaction of the injured person who also appears as the judge, and the allotted punishment is—not as we should expect it to be if we were reading the account for the first time, death by torture—but a mild imprisonment.² It is a strange proof of the deadening influence of familiarity that of the millions who read this narrative there are so few who note that the story (whatever be thought of it in relation to fact) represents the Egyptian code as far more humane than any in the world before the reform of English criminal law. The award coincides with many other indications of the character, or at all events the

¹ Gen. xxxix. 20.

² A somewhat similar instance may be cited from Breasted (p. 498 seq.), to which he assigns an exact date (1167 B.C.). In this year the reigning monarch, Ramses III., escaped murder at the hands of a band of conspirators, and holding their lives in his hands, commissioned a special court for their trial in these terms: "When ye go and examine them ye shall cause those to die who ought to die without my knowing it. Give heed and have a care lest ye execute any one unjustly." Imagine the fate of any other foiled conspirators in the twelfth century before Christ, and for ages after!

ideal, of the Egyptian governor. One may be given, seemingly trivial, yet not without significance. The Egyptian monarch, like the Pope, took a new name at his accession; and these names form, says a diligent investigator of Egyptian lore, "a summary in mottoes of the aim of each monarch."¹ The eleventh dynasty takes its start with the motto "Beginning Justice," and ends with a king who in the same way proclaims that he "Makes his two lands to live." From the following dynasty we may take the two symbols of "renewing births" and "the life of the births" as affording a similar inference. It should not go for nothing that such names were assigned to the ruler. They were not, as with modern nomenclature, appellations of which the significance is forgotten, so that the fact of a Friedrich II. (who should be a "King of Peace") being a great conqueror, never forces on his people the irony of his name. They were rather, as the much-ridiculed Puritan names, sentences in little. It would be easy to make too much of them if we were considering the actual characters of the men who chose them, but whatever be our historic judgment on the persons whom they denote, they witness to a standard of conduct and point to aims and aspirations more in harmony with the broad humanity of our own day than any of which we could discover the slightest trace till a late period in the history of Christendom.

The ideals of Egypt, as so much else in her history, speak to us through the voice of Death. We will turn to an epitaph of an Egyptian governor inscribed between four and five millenniums ago. Ameni, the deputy in a particular nome (i.e. province), is allowed to declare on his tombstone² that the peasants under his control had not only been secure from any harsh or oppressive act from him, but had owed to him such care as a father might give

The ideal
Governor
banishes
hunger,
the ideal
Monarch
banishes
fear.

¹ Flinders Petrie, *History of Egypt*, i. 148.

² Breasted, 160-161, but the epitaph is given more fully in the work by Erman above quoted.

his children. "No widow have I oppressed, no peasant have I repelled. In my community there were no wretched, none were hungry in my day. When the years of famine came I ploughed all the fields of the nome. I kept the inhabitants alive. I gave to the widow even as to her who had a husband, and I never preferred the great to the small." This conception of the duty of the governor is echoed by a similar utterance¹ addressed to the king under whom Ameni lived, by his father, speaking on the verge of the world of the dead, and upholding a standard of royal duty to which the most advanced treatise of modern Liberalism could add but little. "Now thou art a king of earth," the dying addresses the living monarch, "act even better than thy predecessors. Let concord be kept between thy subjects and thyself, lest people should give up their heart to fear. Being among them do not isolate thyself." And then the departing Pharaoh gives his record. "I have given to the humble and let the weak exist. I have given valour to him who had it not. I have made the afflicted ones into not afflicted, and their cries were heard no more." "I am a maker of corn" (note the connection of this ideal of protection with the life of the agricultural labourer). There was no hungry creature through me, no thirsty creature through me, because every one took care to act according to my saying, and all my orders increased the love my people bore me."

Love of the
Neighbour
a national
ideal

In the life of Egypt, as in all life that is penetrated by religion, the ideal for the human is the description of the Divine ruler. "Hail to thee, Ra," says an unknown psalmist,² "Lord of truth, whose shrine is hidden, at whose command the gods were made. Thou listenest to the poor who is in distress, thou deliverest the timid man from the violent. Thou judgest the poor and the oppressed, Lord of mercy most loving, at whose coming men live." This hymn is from

¹ Egyptian texts, *Records of the Past*, vol. ii., Instructions of Amenemhet.

² Hymn to Amen-Ra, *Records of the Past*.

one who lived at the smallest estimate more than three millenniums ago; if it come to our ears as something characteristically modern it is because the moral feeling here expressed is alien alike to the vast empire and to the city-state of antiquity. The Empire crushed its subjects in a common slavery; the city-state, with a sense of liberty perhaps even more antagonistic to a broad humanity, selected its objects of sympathy, and asked an inhabitant of the enclosure—What right have you here? Scrutiny of claim is more unfavourable to compassion than even the sense of irresponsible power. Only on the soil of a Nation can we reckon on a hearing for "the poor who is in distress." We must feel our neighbour an object of interest to us on the mere ground of neighbourhood before we can attend to the appeal of the insignificant and the useless; it must be our business to see that men do not suffer before we set ourselves to remove all the suffering we can reach. No doubt a hard-hearted landlord may grind the peasantry at his gates and neglect the misery he cannot help seeing, while on the other hand a true "lover of men" will feel the sufferings of foreign races and unvisited lands as those of his own kindred; but for ordinary mankind the education in considerateness, in kindness, in compassion, must come from the sense of neighbourhood. In no other ancient country could this sense be as strong as in Egypt. Every Egyptian was neighbour to every other; all dwelt by the same mighty and beneficent stream, by the same encroaching desert; all watched the same changes in the landscape and anticipated the same recurrent events with the rhythm of the year. The duties of the neighbour were in practice forgotten and outraged in Egypt as they were elsewhere. But when we turn to precepts and pretensions we find that goodness of character meant to the Egyptian what it does to us, and we could say the same of no other ancient people, except the Hebrews.

In another respect Egyptian feeling strikes us as modern—its attitude towards Death. We might call Egypt the

and a passport to the heavenly life.

land of Death. It is to the walls of the tomb that we must turn for our knowledge of the private life of this strange people, to whom the most important event in this life seems to have been its conclusion. This, it may be replied, is totally unlike modern life. It will not appear so to those who focus their attention on the true points of comparison. Turn from the dreams of a Christian heaven enshrined in our best sacred poetry to the following extract from an ancient Egyptian papyrus,¹ and you recognise a kindred spirit. "I say to myself each day, 'As the first walk of an invalid, as the odour of a flower-bed, as a sheltered seat, as a path through the inundation—such is Death!'" These varied and homely images of rest, relief, and escape bring home to the mind faint echoes from Vaughan, from Herbert, from Keble; any possible reminiscence from Euripides or Plato is in comparison remote or even misleading. And when we would seek a code of morality harmonious with the best aspirations of modern feeling, we shall find it, not in any extracts from the great thinkers of antiquity, but in that curious collection of Egyptian liturgies known to us as the *Book of the Dead*.

If every other remains of Egyptian literature had been utterly destroyed it would be enough, in order to justify a claim for exceptional humanity in ancient Egypt, to point to this collection of liturgies, a copy of which was deposited with the mummy as a sort of passport to the realms beyond the tomb. It contains a confession obligatory on every soul which is to cross the threshold of Heaven: a confession excluding from the mansions beyond, those who have left the hungry unfed, the sick untended, the prisoner unvisited.² He who is to enter into the joy of his Lord, must repeat and expand the declarations of Ameni and Amenemhet; he must declare that he has not oppressed his kindred, not ill-

¹ Given by Maspero, *Hist. Ancienne des Peuples de l'Orient Classique*, i. 399.

² Budge, *Book of the Dead*, Translation, pp. 191-2. Compare with Matt. xxv. 31-40.

treated his slaves nor exacted from them excessive labour, or been the cause (note the carefulness of attention implied in the addition) of cruelty towards the slaves of others, that through his act no hunger has been suffered, no tear has been shed. "I have not," he is made to plead, "deprived the babe of its milk. I have not used a deceitful weight. I have attacked no man, I have deceived no man, I have terrified no man, I have slandered no man. I have never been insolent or ill-tempered or a mischief-maker. I have given bread to the hungry, water to the thirsty, apparel to the naked, a boat to the shipwrecked. I have done that which is right and true for the Lord of right and truth." Could there be a higher or purer conception of the Lord of right and truth than that he was one to whom this declaration was a passport? The foregoing extracts are often cited as a "negative confession." The description is justified by the form of the statements here ascribed to the spirit before the awful throne, but the ideal of goodness enunciated in all these autobiographic declarations is positive. We are not here concerned with the question whether this ideal was actually carried out by the people who professed it in forms so various. Perhaps no human being could make the declaration demanded of the death freed soul, unless he had had no opportunity of committing the sins there repudiated. The reputation to which an epitaph can testify is that which is desired, not that which is earned. But we need not enquire whether eulogy be just before we admit it as manifesting an ideal. When we seek the moral standard of a race it is even more important to remember the things men honour, than the things they do.

The national worship of Egypt, in its best known expression, manifests a sympathy with weakness, with failure, such as, if we exclude Palestine, we cannot discover elsewhere throughout the ancient world. The only Egyptian god whose name is familiar to modern ears is a victim. Osiris belongs to the group of divinities whose worship is a

The promise of Death.

lament; he is a kinsman of Adonis, of Tammuz, of Balder, of all those divine beings in whom we may recognise an expression of the spirit of regret which haunts mankind; the spirit which is roused in its poignant form, or perhaps as much recalled as roused, by early death, and symbolised by the perishing of the dawn in the daylight, the fresh beauty of spring in the parching heat of summer, or the glow of autumn in winter frosts. If the worship of the bright joyous Greek showed but little trace of this spirit, it is not impossible to discover side by side with the "God who hath no part in misery"¹ traces of some yearnings even here after the tokens of Divine sympathy with defeat and sorrow, and in most of the religions of the past the feeling comes out more definitely. We are sometimes told that these Divine victims—Linus, Tammuz, Adonis, Balder, the numerous forms of youthful charm snatched away by untimely fate, and commemorated in annual lament—merely record some natural fact translated into mythic yearning. The reader is tempted to suspect that such interpretation may invert the actual relation of the inward and the outward. The succession of the seasons no doubt is older than humanity, but the great emotions of humanity give to the vicissitude of nature more than they receive. The sun sets only to rise, we are told, and the whole drama of death and resurrection is explained as a solar myth. Surely we gain a deeper clue to its meaning in remembering that

"The Clouds that gather round the setting sun
Do take a sober colouring from an eye
That hath kept watch o'er man's mortality."

The succession of the seasons is a fact, but is it not also a symbol? The burst of spring and the flush of dawn take all their deepest beauty from emotions which they express as truly as words or music do, and to make them the original

¹ οὐδὲν προσήκοντ' ἐν γόοις παραστατεῖν (*Æsch. Agamemnon*, 1079). It is the remonstrance of the Chorus to the captive Cassandra who has invoked Apollo amid her tears.

reality, and the legend which embodies them the mere fanciful illustration of their significance, is surely to confuse the reflection with the reality.

The story of Osiris, like so much that belongs to the region of mythology and legendary history, follows the strife of two brothers, representative severally of the worlds of good and of evil. It is as if in all such early narrative, which is often symbolic narrative, there were shadowed forth some dim adumbration of the kindred nature of all emotion belonging to the moral world. The contrary of love is not hatred but indifference. "If I were a steam engine," says Carlyle, "thou wouldst not hate me." Good and evil are foes, but they are brothers; their strife has the bitterness that belongs to the strife of kindred. The hatred of the evil Set for the good Osiris is as irrational as that which inspired the murder of Abel; we cannot indeed reach so much of an excuse for the Egyptian Cain as may be imagined in the case of his prototype. The dark spirit abhors the light from the natural repugnance of evil for good, and finding no answering repugnance easily triumphs over unsuspecting innocence. Osiris perishes beneath a treacherous attack, and Set appears the unquestioned victor for the time. The account given by Plutarch¹ is so incoherent that it seems as if either some symbolism were misunderstood, or else that a legend had been confused with a myth. We hear of Osiris as a mighty monarch, the civiliser not only of his own domain of Egypt, but of the world; a Charlemagne who conquers not by arms, but by genius and goodness; a benefactor to the human race, whose claim on its gratitude must have been acknowledged by all. Yet the trick to which he falls a victim, as told by Plutarch, could befall only an insignificant individual. Set has obtained exact measurement of his brother's stature, and had a chest made to fit it, beautifully painted and decorated like those Italian wedding chests on which we sometimes find the work of a master.

Osiris, the
helpless
victim.

¹ *De Iside et Osiride.*

Thus ornamented it is produced at a feast and promised to any one whose stature it exactly fits. The guests lie down in it successively, till the turn comes to Osiris, in whose stature we must presume there was something peculiar, as that of no predecessor coincides with it, and on him the lid snaps down, accomplices rush from the crowd (we are even told their exact number, seventy-two), the coffin is made fast with its living occupant, and is carried down the Nile to the sea. Have we here some parable of the sinking Nile? or some story invented to explain the traditional mummy carried round at the feast to remind the carousers of their inevitable destiny? We need some such explanation, for Osiris here appears as neither royal, heroic, nor wise. He seems simply a type of defeat. The whole victory remains with Set, who even appears as the more beloved of the two. Osiris perishes, as far as appears here, unpitied and unhelped, without the dignity of struggle, without the halo of widespread sympathy; he is a victim and nothing more.

Osiris, the
risen God.

If we look to the earthly fate of Osiris, he is the least admirable of all the victim gods, Hellenic and Oriental, whom we may recognise as his kindred.¹ But he is distinguished from them all by the fact that the significance of his story is to be found not in his earthly fate, but in a life beyond the grave, which we may imagine his previous career dimmed to enhance by contrast. He falls an unheroic man; he rises a god. He perishes as the victim of a stupid trick; he survives as the ruler of the underworld. No figure from mythology comes so near to Christian belief and hopes. The faithful dead are incorporated with him, and it is literally in his name that an entrance into the Egyptian

¹ Synesius, an African bishop at the beginning of the fifth century, uses the story as a mere pattern of successful knavery and credulous goodness, in a way somewhat out of harmony with the sense of its spiritual significance (*De Providentiâ*). One is inclined to imagine a double origin for the story as a legend and a myth, a hypothesis which would not, however, weaken its force in the last character.

heaven is sought for by all.¹ It has been thought that Rhadamanthus is a Greek version of one of his Egyptian titles.² The etymology would correctly describe his office in the invisible world, for the Egyptian Heaven opens or closes its gates in accordance with his verdict, but the idea of stern judgment is out of harmony with everything known of him. We think of him most truly as the embodied hope of humanity beyond the grave. "She lived twenty-five years," says a Greek epitaph, "and in the world below Osiris gave her to drink of living waters."³ What a musical note sounds through the ages in those words! They seem to find their echo in Lamb's address to a

"Sprightly neighbour, gone before
To that unknown and silent shore."

They bring to the modern reader an inevitable sense of modern life, for the emotions roused by untimely death, the hopes that cluster round some beloved spouse or daughter snatched away in the bloom of youth, although themselves as old as humanity, are for us associated with modern expression, while the hopes of Christian reunion, reiterated through so many ages, and often expressed without much meaning, can rarely attain the touch of pathos contained in this foreshadowing of a Christian sorrow and hope, uttered by one who never heard the name of Christ. In isolated utterances a range is ascribed to Osiris even wider than that of the everlasting home of human spirits. An ancient hymn⁴ tells us that he "has made all this world with his hand, its atmosphere, its vegetation, all these flocks, all these fowls, these fishes, these reptiles, these quadrupeds—he made them

¹ The dead person is called Osiris N, just as we call any one a Christian.

² "In Rhadamanthus, judge of the dead," says Sir Gardner Wilkinson (*Ancient Egyptians*, iii 73), "the name of Amenti is easily recognised." Amenti is the Egyptian land of the dead.

³ Quoted in *Le Mythe Osirien* by Eugène Lefébure, Paris, 1874, *Revue Archéologique* (1864), vol. ii. p. 222.

⁴ Given in *Records of the Past*, vol. iv. It is an inscription on a funereal tablet (now in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris), which cannot be later than the end of the eighteenth dynasty, and is thought to be much older.

all." Few ancient writings so clearly point to an act of Creation. It is as if the author felt a danger in the strong bent of the mind of his countrymen towards the world beyond the grave, as if he desired to link both worlds under one dominion, and crown Osiris with a double crown, like that borne by the Pharaoh, symbolising the "united kingdom" of the visible and invisible world.

Osiris and
Christ.

It is strange to think that when Plutarch wrote of Osiris, another death, another resurrection was gathering to itself the attention of the world, and that he who gave so much space to the victim god of the far past had not a word for the victim god of his own time and of all time. He lived when the Divine Victim was emerging into the heaven of men's worship to solace broken hearts and lift up bruised hopes. Yet while the story of Osiris, to judge from the space he has given it, was to him as interesting as that of Alexander, the story of the Christ had no interest for him.

Isis, the
precursor
of Mary.

It is in the spouse of Osiris that we must look for the deepest part of the interest attaching to his legend. The story of Isis indeed gathers up all the pathos that Egyptian lore has to contribute to the legendary wealth of our race. She is indeed almost as much a Greek or Roman as an Egyptian goddess; nay if we are to believe Tacitus,¹ her worship had exceeded the range of classic dominion and rooted itself in German soil. The fact that some Teutonic goddess should have been mistaken for her is almost as weighty a tribute to her fame as would be the actual loan from the Nile; and perhaps we may say the same of a fantastic etymology which has connected her name with that of the French capital.² But she needs no such doubtful testimony; traces of her worship on the Seine or the Rhine, however firmly they might be established, are less significant

¹ "Pars Suevorum et Isidi sacrificat." He records the fact with surprise, "Unde causa et origo peregrino sacro, parum comperi" (*Germania*, 9).

² According to an Italian editor of Tacitus, Alto Vannucci—"Vi ha che crede che il nome moderno della capitale di Francia venga da un tempio consacrato a questa Dea in vicinanza da quella capitale," par' Isin.

than the inheritance of the essential idea of that worship by the faith of mediæval Europe. Her image blends with that dear to the heart of Christendom for so many ages as the Divine Mother, a glance at the Egyptian representations of Isis with the infant Horus on her knee reveals the archetype of the Pre-Raphaelite Holy Family. Literature points the lesson as clearly as Art. Her name is connected, in fiction indeed, but fiction more illuminative of ideals than much history, with supplication as heartfelt as was ever addressed to the Virgin Mary.¹ "Queen of Heaven, by whatever name we should worship thee—whether Ceres, giver of man's daily bread, Venus propagator of his race, or any other goddess to which man's heart has turned—bear thou the prayer of the needy, succour me in my extreme distress, give peace to one worn out by suffering! Or if some God pursues me with inexorable wrath and to live is forbidden then do thou grant me death." And the goddess answers with a revelation of her supreme nature, a supremacy far above that claimed by the Homeric Zeus, since she is not only present in the many forms her suppliant has included in his prayer, but also rules in the shades below, shining resplendent amid the darkness of Acheron like the moon in which she finds her fitting symbol, and worshipped under her true name by the Egyptians as Isis. Her intervention substitutes a growing joy for a profound misery, and the life of the redeemed suppliant is devoted to her service. This is the picture of Isis given in a tale which has been described as the first modern romance. If Christians were substituted for Egyptians, and Mary for Isis, the passage would be at once adapted to a larger audience than that for which it was designed, and which it fully reached.

Isis is the Divine Mother of the ancient world, but it is not in her relations with her son that we find most of ^{Isis the sister of Demeter.}

¹ Apuleius, *Golden Ass*, xi. As this is not a literary history, I have, while carefully preserving the actual words of any citation, felt at liberty to omit whatever seemed to me superfluous.

the tenderness of motherly devotion. The legend, in the form in which it reaches us,¹ bears traces of a struggle between her and Horus in which we might trace in an inverted form the struggle between Mercy and Justice adumbrated on the page of Milton and adopted by an obsolete theology. Here, by what modern feeling will recognise as a contrast truer to experience, it is the son who craves mere Justice; the parent who insists on the deeper justice known as Mercy; while some readers, perhaps, will see in the act which rouses the wrath of Horus as much weakness as mercy. Horus has engaged in battle with the murderer of his father and is victorious, but when the fratricide lies bound and awaits his final doom the righteous vengeance of the victor is balked by his mother's all-embracing compassion; she intervenes to set free the murderer of her husband, and turns her son's wrath upon herself. "In his fury," says Plutarch, "Horus laid violent hands upon his mother, and snatched the royal diadem from her head," or in what is evidently the original account, softened by Greek taste on the page of Plutarch, her head from her shoulders. A cow's head being given her in exchange supplies a link with the story of Io. In this legend the reader recognises as much the faint conception of evil characteristic of Egyptian religion as any premonition of a Christian ideal of Redemption, but the expansive maternity and indiscriminating compassion of Isis is elsewhere exhibited in forms with which we can feel unmixed sympathy, as when she seeks out and nourishes at her breast an infant who is the offspring of her husband's infidelity to herself. She is an incarnation of pity, her own sorrows being all melted down into this yearning spirit of succour towards all the needy. From the first she is a mourner, and a pretty saying common in Egypt in the second century of our era²—one of the few poetic blossoms to be found on the banks of

¹ Plutarch, *De Iside et Osiride*.

² Pausanias, x. 32.

the Nile—ascribes the rise of the river to the “tears of Isis.” Those tears water other soil than that of Egypt. Isis wanders far and wide seeking the chest that holds the dear remains, and must have crossed the desert or the sea before she reaches the Syrian coast, where a strange chance has built up the painted coffin in a palace—a designation we must interpret with reminiscence of Homeric royalty, where the king’s daughter directs and takes part in the family washing. Here we find the goddess in the disguise of a nurse to the royal children, a lowly position bringing out the deep maternity of her nature, and revealing her superhuman powers. She has stooped to this service from a desire to possess herself of the chest, but her interest in the child committed to her charge awakens other tender yearnings, and she resolves to communicate to her nursling what for the first time we realise as her own immortality. The gift would have been made, had not the mortal mother, a secret witness of the fire-bath where all that was mortal was to be purged away in celestial flame, interrupted it by terrified screams and forfeited the precious gift. But here the figure of Isis expands and etherealises; we recognise another mourner seeking not a coffin enclosing a dead form, but a living child; a characteristic touch of the different spirit of mythology in Egypt and Greece. If the writer of the Homeric hymn to Demeter was a plagiarist from Egypt, his plagiarism is like one of Shakespeare’s, a jewel rightly belonging to him who has set it in gold more precious than itself. Isis is both the earliest and the latest form of the divine mourner; she was a far elder figure than Demeter and long survived her; her worship lingers on in that Oriental revival of Paganism preceding Christianity till she passed in a form not greatly altered into the new faith. She thus embodies the whole development of an ideal confined to no age and no race, and in reading some expressions of devotion to her we feel vividly that the Divine Mother was a hope to the ancient world long

before she could be recognised as either a prophecy or a reminiscence.

Symbolism
of the
narrative.

There is nothing subject to the vicissitude suggestive of life and death, says Plutarch in effect, which we might not identify with Osiris or with his kindred antagonist. We may associate him with the sweet waters of the Nile, as contrasted in the Delta with the bitter waters of the Mediterranean in which they are swallowed up, or in Upper Egypt with the encroaching desert sands which equally narrow and invade the beneficent field of their operations. When we remember that Set and Osiris are brothers it is the first metaphor which seems most harmonious with the legend, the bitter unfructifying waters of the sea drowning the spirit of fertility hid in the river; and the contrast affording a natural type of the good and bad brother. Many voices echo the suggestion. We think of Homer's "unploughed sea," of St. John's "there shall be no more sea," and then of Napoleon's "were I the master of Egypt not one drop of those waters should reach the sea," and the century between that aspiration and its partial achievement in our own time; we feel the parable of Osiris and Set more transparent as we recall our own arduous endeavour to save the precious from the worthless water; even the grotesque details of the story seem to gain significance in our struggle to save the life-giving from the death-bringing flood. To the dwellers in Upper Egypt the symbolism of the Nile and the desert would more naturally represent the conflict of good and evil. A people on whom this symbolism was constantly impressed in any particular form would be ready to discover it in any other. Plutarch, after fumbling at the meaning of the legend with a dim conviction that its significance may be detached from its incidents, rises into poetry as he compares it to the rainbow ready to melt into the white ray of truth. The various explanations which had been invented, he tells us, are singly erroneous, right only in combination; Set does not symbolise merely

Drought, or Wind, or Sea, or Darkness, each of which in turn had been supposed the germ of the allegory, but every part of nature that is hurtful or destructive; and Osiris is the Sun, the Nile, the principle of all growth and life—the spirit of all that opposes and is opposed by evil. But the dualism is incomplete, the evil influence seems faint and transient. The fate of Set is indistinct and obscure, as indeed is all Egyptian mythology touching upon evil. There is the same sort of shadowy receding of the dark form as in the oblivion of Satan at the close of the book of Job. Set is released and forgotten, his victim is recognised as supreme. We have the instinct of a mild and merciful people softened and weakened by that tendency to materialism which loses the distinction of good and evil.

The Egyptian alone, as far as we know the history of the ancient peoples of the world, combined materialism with the belief in immortality. He seems to have been as sure of a life after death as of the sun rising on the morrow; the one event was a daily type and promise of the other. But the life beyond death was to be a mere continuation of the life on this side of death, with all its cares and all its material interests. The spirit revived to exactly the same anxieties for meat and drink as had occupied it in this world—anxieties which, if not left behind at death, grow far more weighty with their indefinite prolongation. To us these cares are a part of the transient world; they press heavily while they last; but if they fill our four-score years here they cease absolutely at the grave. It is difficult for us even to imagine any vista beyond where they could have a part. It is startling to discover that a Heaven which the purest morality was necessary to reach reflected the sordid interests of earth. The visions in which we look for the goal of aspiration and the home of ideals embody the precautions and anxieties of a petty thrift; the repeated promises of or petitions for bread, beer, and cakes seem to choke the future with all that is least noble in the present, and

Unique
combina-
tion of
material-
ism with
spiritual-
ism.

sometimes lead us to wonder whether a vista thus filled is worth opening. And as we turn from the Egyptian to the Hebrew Scriptures we partly understand the silence of the latter on the life beyond the grave. If indeed the first great prophet of Israel was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, we can well believe that he sought to screen his countrymen from a line of speculation which had taught him how far the search into an endless future might lead from the Eternal. If Israel in Egypt associated that belief with sordid cares and trivial precautions, we can understand how Israel in Palestine came to dread the belief itself as an infinite prolongation of such cares. To find God here and now, to have *this* life glorified by His presence, thus became to Hebrew imagination an aim actually obscured by the endless yet ignoble prolongation of existence which was offered as a substitute for His eternity.

Egypt a
premature
nation.
Loss of a
national
childhood.

Egypt, we have seen, was the only nation, in the full sense of the word, to be found in the early world. Perhaps we may connect that premature attainment with some defects which at first sight seem to have no connection with it. It may be that the Egyptians reached their majority too early, that something was lacking to the national development which only struggle can impart. The life of the nation is a factor in all large thought; it colours aspiration and moulds ideals unconsciously to those who aspire and imagine; it is present like the atmosphere; and its wealth or poverty passes into man's daily life. The student of Egyptian life feels some lack in that development. In comparing Egyptian utterances with those of other young races, he discerns something that we can only characterise as childish. Its moral standard (we have surely established) comes nearer to the ideal of modern Christianity than that of any other people whose life we must cross the chasm of millenniums to appreciate. If nevertheless we are haunted by this impression of childishness, if that imaginative growth which distinguishes the maturity of the mind from its earlier stages seems

lacking to the Egyptian conceptions of a life longer than that of the nation, may it not be that the nation was itself precocious, and that the thoughts of its sons hurried on to an endless world before they had taken in the full teaching of that which is perennial?

CHAPTER II

INDIA AND THE PRIMAL UNITY

A nation is
perennial,
not neces-
sarily im-
mortal.

THE subject of history is a middle term between the eternal and the transient. The life with which it deals, though more abiding than that of the individual sons of men, is not necessarily endless. In ordinary circumstances the three-score years allotted by the Psalmist to the strong man mark but little change on its dial ; but the Greece of to-day is in only a geographical sense the Greece of Leonidas and Pericles ; the true Hellas had a life hardly less brief than theirs. We are apt to suppose that such a demise is possible only for the life of antiquity ; we find it almost impossible to imagine that the object of devotion which we know as England should cease to exist. Doubtless our island, our race, and our language must remain, as far as we can see, while the world lasts, but in the sense that Greece has perished we must allow that England may perish. That animating unity which makes it

“ Praise enough

To fill the ambition of a private man

That Chatham's language was his mother tongue

And Wolfe's great name compatriot with his own ”¹—

this might become a thing of the past, for us as for the men of Athens or Sparta. It might ; no one would say that it must. As we cannot look back upon the past without seeing that the life of a nation may come to an end, so we cannot look forward to the future and allow ourselves to acquiesce

¹ Cowper, *The Task*.

in such an anticipation. No son of England may welcome the light of sunset for his country, as any wise man may welcome it for himself. No cosmopolitan claim swallows up the duty of national self-preservation as every national claim swallows up the duty of individual self-preservation; and while the man who gives his life for his country is a hero, the country in which the aim arose to give up its life for the world would have already ceased to be a nation.

For the life sacrificed by the patriot is essentially a transient thing; in a year or two, in a decade or two, that would have ended at any rate. The hopes and fears, desires and aims, which must be surrendered with it, may be shorter even than the short life which encloses them. Anything in him which is immortal is untouched by the sacrifice. We cannot say this of the life of a nation. No doubt there is a sense in which "the glory that was Greece" is immortal. The thoughts of Plato, the creations of the great dramatists, even the remaining works of the great artists, are living forces for all time, and with a widening range as the reading and artistic world increases. Nevertheless the blank left by Greece in the world's history is, as far as human eyes can see, pure loss. The best-known English historian of Greece laid down his pen at an epoch from which, he says, "dates not only the extinction of Grecian political freedom and self-action, but also the decay of productive genius and the debasement of that consummate literary and rhetorical excellence which the century has seen exhibited in Plato and Demosthenes." "The contents of this last volume," continues the historian, "indicate but too clearly that Greece as a separate subject of history no longer exists."¹ Let the reader ask himself whether he can conceive of any aim for the sake of which he would be willing that some future historian should make that statement concerning England. To ask the question is to answer it; only by those who forget the possibility of a national demise can

Yet its end
appears
always
unnatural.

¹ Grote, *History of Greece*, vol. xii., end of concluding chapter.

such a contingency be neglected for the sake of any object that the will of man can advance or retard.

The
Eternal
is less
readily
suggested
by the
perennial
than by the
transient.

Hence arises the antagonism, so surprising yet so unquestionable, between the interests that are rooted in the perennial and the eternal life respectively. Attention to the interests of a life far exceeding the sojourn of each one of us in this world should prepare the mind, we might anticipate, for the interests of a world knowing no change with the changing years. Experience shows the anticipation to be erroneous; further reflection suggests that it is unreasonable. The mere etymology of the word secular proves that whatever lasts for ages tends to detach the mind from what lasts for ever. It is the transient which, when it ceases to be absorbing, suggests the Eternal. There comes a time in the lives of most persons who live to old age when strong desire is recalled with a smile, and successful effort with a sigh; when we turn from the spectacle of change and decay to seek some enduring reality—

“Life like a dome of many-coloured glass
Stains the white radiance of Eternity.”¹

To remember that those lines are Shelley's is to realise that the transitoriness of life suggests the repose of the Eternal even to those who hardly give the Eternal their credence. Of this inevitable suggestion, so common as to be almost hidden in the commonplace, there is nothing in the contrast between the perennial and the eternal. The occupations of the citizen suggest no contrasted background. The life of politics throws all other life into the shade. Nothing else is so engrossing, nothing else seems so abundantly to justify its absorbing attraction. It is unselfish in the sense that it carries a man beyond his own individual interests. Yet it makes no demand on his belief in a world other than that which he sees; and while its own vast spaces seem to shut in all legitimate objects of hope and fear, we can hardly project

¹ Shelley, *Adonais*.

in imagination its interests on the life beyond. All who recognise the urgent duties, the profound responsibilities, the tremendous claims of political life, and then again recognise another set of interests not less wide-reaching and even more enduring—all such must be aware that the antagonism between these is among the deepest which separates mankind. We may not understand it, we may not acquiesce in its necessity, but we must allow that this is what happens, as inevitably as we must allow that sunrise obliterates the stars. To observe the effect of the political on the spiritual life is like watching the sky at dawn. It is possible that a life which Parliaments can neither give nor take away should be discerned amid the clash of party strife; it is possible also that a star should be seen through a telescope at noon; but the one experience, probably, is as rare as the other.

In the case of an individual, though the influence of the Unseen seldom dominates him entirely, men recognise it as a practical force when it does. By finding his home in the Eternal he is not cut off from efficient action in the temporal; he is only the better able to make use of the outward when freed from its tyranny. But in the case of that group of individuals which we know as the State it does not appear as if this were true. A race which finds its dominating interest in the Unseen seems to miss some spring of development. Hitherto, at all events, what we call progress has involved the clash of this interest with something below itself. A people knowing nothing of the claims of that which we mean by a Church would be quite unlike anything we have known hitherto in the evolution of humanity. But if the Church be everything, if there be no representative of merely secular interests, the race to which it belongs drops out of the forward march of nations. The full development of a nation seems to demand some kind of conflict between these principles; it is as if this conflict supplied the indispensable exercise needful to a healthful national life.

The antagonism an element in national development.

This
element
lacking to
India.

This, at all events, is the inference suggested by the life of the only great people of which we may say that its secular affairs have always taken a secondary place. Such a people, or rather such a congeries of peoples, was and is that which occupies the vast peninsula of India. To discover the true centre of its life we must turn from the world of event and narrative to confront one which does not change with the hurrying years. When we seek to map out its inheritance on the chart of history we must either borrow the illuminating influence of foreign associations, or register a blank. It is not merely that India has no records of its own. Other countries do not wait till we begin to study their own records before they impress themselves on our attention. Take the race whose ancient language differs as little from that of the Hindu as French from Italian, and think of all that an average reader cannot help knowing of Persia. The name of Cyrus or Xerxes awakens vague associations in almost anybody. The allusions in current literature, in the daily newspaper, in the Bible, the chance illustrations of a picture gallery or a museum—all these vague, familiar, recurrent sources of knowledge—have instilled a certain amount of information which supplies, even if it be erroneous, a framework for fuller acquaintance. The empire of India would contain all other countries concerning which there is any ancient life to remember many times over;¹ the existence of the Hindu race as a separate people began almost as long ago as that of any of the races which occupied them, and its early civilisation was as full of promise; but what does the ordinary reader know of India even in the vague way that he knows of Sennacherib as a great Assyrian conqueror, or of some Egyptian to whom he attaches the name of Sesostris? What even is known to a member of that race which is bound to know something about

¹ It is nearly as large as Europe without Russia. China, having no ancient life in the sense here intended, is not reckoned in this comparison.

India? To an average Englishman the name recalls the most distinguished and interesting portion of the British Empire, and it recalls almost nothing else. India, to such a one, means British India. A country civilised three thousand years ago had no history worth remembering, he supposes, till within the last couple of centuries. If asked for an event in its history he would mention some victory of his own countrymen at least four millenniums after the beginning of Indian life; if for the name of an Indian he would probably pass over the one familiar name from some doubt whether Buddha be a god or a man, to recall with difficulty some victim of British conquest. Such is the ordinary knowledge of India even for a member of the nation which feels the governing of India its duty and its right.

This ignorance is not the result of mere indolence. The true India, unaffected by Mahomedan and Christian conquest, has little to tell the reader who seeks its place on the stream of time. Not indeed that it lacks ancient records, or that the vista which they open is a short one. About a millennium before Alexander renounced its conquest one of its earliest singers uttered a prayer for the long life enjoyed by its ancestors.¹ The desire opens a past more significant to European readers than that of either Egypt or Assyria, for it is a past kindred with their own present, the past of that Aryan race which fills half the world, and rules the rest. But the records which remain from the Indian past, while they suggest interesting problems, and demonstrate important conditions, narrate nothing to which the Western world gives ear. We are led into a realm where outline is lost in colour. Before Alexander we hardly come upon a date. The illuminations of a brilliant personality seems, like the kindling of an electric lamp, to deepen into night the twilight sur-

Indian
history
legible only
by flashes
from the
West.

¹ *Der Rigveda, oder die heiligen Hymnen der Brahmanen, zum ersten Male übersetzt von Alfred Ludwig.* i. 121, 10.

rounding it. By that momentary glow we catch a glimpse of strange vivid figures, we see ourselves in face of a people impressive to the Greek imagination but wholly alien from the Greek world.¹ Porus, the Indian king, whose vast height matches his regal dignity, with the elephant which attains a sort of mythic distinction by extracting the darts from the body of its wounded master—Calanus the philosopher,² whose consent to follow Alexander, and his subsequent self-chosen death in the flames of his own funeral pyre, measures the sacrifice made by an Indian when he quitted the life of contemplation even to accept splendid offers from the greatest monarch of his or any time:—such figures as these, more at home, we might fancy, on the pages of the Arabian Nights than on those of Plutarch and Arrian, suggest a rich mysterious life which this sally from the West finds and leaves behind. But our light goes out, and the figures vanish like those of an interrupted dream. We regain no similar illumination till our own day, and apart from such illumination we never see the life of India.

Negative
ten-
lency
of Indian
thought

We find in Indian literature a stylistic trait which we may remember in connection with this blank of history. A simile can be expressed as a negative. The resemblance is taken for granted, what is put into words is the negation of identity. Thus the sun and moon were spoken of "as moving about but *not* as animals, the rivers were roaring and fighting but were *not* men, the fire was eating up the forest but was *not* a lion."³ A negative idiom so alien to

¹ Plutarch, *Life of Alexander*.

² *Ibid* 65 and 69. Cf. Cicero, *Tusc.* ii. 22, a reference which would lose all its point if, as Plutarch (living two hundred years later) seems to suggest, the suicide were due to disease. Cf. also Strabo, xv. 1, 64. The message of the dying Calanus to Alexander, that they should meet at Babylon, where the great conqueror shortly afterwards expired, forms a dramatic conclusion to the intercourse between the conqueror of the world and the despiser of the world. A modern writer (Col. Sleeman, *Rambles of an Indian Official*) gives an account of a widow's death on the funeral pyre strikingly resembling that of Calanus.

³ Max Muller, *Lectures on the Origin and Growth of Religion as illustrated by the Religions of India*, 1882, p. 100.

the European mind needs modification by the translator, who naturally substitutes *like* for *not*. The tendency is no mere accident of dialect; we come upon another and more significant instance of the same feeling in one of the most profound passages of the later Indian religion, where it is said of the Absolute Being that He is only to be described by "No, no,"¹ a meaning which we include when we speak of the Infinite, but which the Indian renders more forcible by imagining some limiting conception, and then as it were thinking it away. The description gives a clue to the Indian ideal for humanity. The Indian spirit, in its full development, said "No, no" to all natural impulse, and hastened towards that ideal of renunciation which culminates in the religion it came to consider a deadly foe. Nirvana expresses the goal of its progress; "extinction"² (to translate that familiar word) describes the condition which became the goal of moral endeavour to the Indian race.

But the goal was of late discovery in the history of the race. When we turn to the earliest Hindu poetry we come upon the expression of a hopeful vigorous people, as full of practical interests and enjoyment of life as our own. The Vedic hymns and prayers chanted from three to four millenniums ago, on the shores of the five rivers which empty themselves into the Arabian Sea, ask fearlessly for wealth, cattle, a numerous family, for all that makes up a conventional prosperity. They do also, it is true, seek spiritual blessings, but not more urgently than these; their wishes seem all on one plane, like the wishes of children. And all their prayers are brought with equal fearless trust to the throne of the divinities who filled their heaven. Thus while India has no history in the ordinary sense of the word, that of a record of external definitely

a late development in Indian life.

¹ *Upanishads, Sacred Books of the East*, xv. pp. 148-149. The sentence is repeated four times in different connections.

² This etymology connects the various meanings of the word, ranging between "freedom from old age, disease, and death" (Max Müller, *Selected Essays*, i. 121), and annihilation.

dated events, no country exhibits a more striking phase of evolution in that life of the soul where all events find their hidden spring. We cannot say of any other people that their spiritual progress measures so vast an interval. Their earliest utterances recall all that is most positive in the utterances of other races. Their latest turn towards negation.

Similarity
of the
Sanskrit
and
Hebrew
Psalms.

The literature in which this early religion is recorded possesses an unique claim on the interest of modern Europeans. It is the earliest utterance not only of the Indian but of the Aryan race. In the *Rigveda* we have the first word which reaches us from the elder brother of the Greek, the Teuton, the Celt, the Slav; the morning hymn of the people who were called upon to make the world what it is. Imagination might give these poems an even richer ancestry; their most interesting portion for many readers will be found in invocations which recall the utterance of a Semitic people. Here and there the psalms of India recall the psalms of Judea.¹ There is in both the same vivid enjoyment of the outer world, the same childlike desire for earthly good things, the same sense of a divine presence in the great phenomena of nature, and above all the same deep yearning for union with a spiritual Being above humanity. Sometimes we find almost the same sense of the unique reality of this Being.² The Vedas address the Divine under many names, but as we turn from the invocations to one Deity after another, we feel the difference between one and another to be mainly one of aspect. The

¹ See the interesting series of lectures given in St. Paul's by Dean Church in January and February 1874, published under the title *The Sacred Poetry of Early Religions*: a study which does not, however, seem to me to do justice to the Vedas. The English reader will find an instructive and readable account of the Vedas, and indeed of all that is known of early India, in the *History of Civilization in Ancient India* (1890), by Mr. Romesh Chunder Dutt, whose generous help with the present chapter I take this opportunity of gratefully acknowledging.

² The name henotheistic has been invented to express the worship which, in addressing a particular deity as supreme, rather forgets than denies the existence of others.

real object of adoration is a Unity. But the different character of this Unity from that of Hebrew adoration reminds us that the seeming kinship is misleading. The Indian tendency towards confusion is present from the first; the Vedas are not themselves pantheistic, they are rather at once polytheistic and monotheistic, but we are from time to time reminded that the progress is towards Pantheism. Perhaps the distinction of the One and the Many belongs to a later age than that of the Vedas. In returning to these early poems we pierce behind all that we know as Polytheism and Monotheism to the first recognition of the Divine. Might not the following hymn, accessible to the reader in the graceful English of a writer whom it is difficult not to claim as an Englishman,¹ almost find its place in our Prayer-Book? -

"If I go along trembling, like a cloud driven by the wind,
 Have mercy, Almighty, have mercy.
 Through want of strength, thou strong and bright God, have I
 gone astray.
 Have mercy, Almighty, have mercy.
 Thirst came upon the worshipper, though he stood in the midst of
 the waters.
 Have mercy, Almighty, have mercy.
 Whenever we men, O Varuna, commit an offence before the
 heavenly host;
 Whenever we break the law through thoughtlessness;
 Have mercy, Almighty, have mercy."

Note the spirit of fearless confidence in the belief that the thirsting worshipper stood in the midst of the waters. Those waters, however mysteriously hidden, are near; we are surrounded by the Divine, even while we yearn, as it seems vainly, to attain to it. Varuna is a deliverer of those who have broken the law; he sets men free from all the burden and bondage of wrong. "He will be gracious even to him who is not blameless."² Other expressions even more closely

¹ Max Müller gives the translation in a lecture reprinted in his *Selected Essays*, ii. 148-149.

² This and the two following extracts are taken from the same lecture.

resemble the Psalms. "Yearning for him, the far-seeing, my thoughts move onwards, as kine to their pastures," is the aspiration of one who surely might have gone on to the declaration, "The Lord is my Shepherd." "Varuna is he who watches over men's minds as a herdsman over cattle." The song of the Vedic poet, even better than the pencil of Raphael, may illustrate to Christian ears the meaning of the Good Shepherd. It brings home to us with a freshness lacking to the imagery of our own Scriptures the teaching that lies in our care of the creatures below us, even when this care is ultimately for our own sake.

Their
actual kin-
ship is with
Greek
legend.

The reminiscence which the Sanscrit psalms awaken of their Hebrew kindred is the expression of what is universal in human nature: the common utterance, in widely remote races, and very different circumstances, of that yearning after the invisible which races, as individuals, feel with different intensity, but which races, unlike individuals, never wholly cease to feel. On another side these hymns bring us in view of a literature to which they are related by a special affinity; they recall Hellenic mythology as well as Hebrew religion. The Hindu and the Greek race, like many individual brothers destined never again to see each other's face, recall a far-off nursery where they learnt the same lessons, and listened to the same fairy tales. The hymns and the fairy tales blend in the joint infancy of the races; the severed brothers remember them in different proportions, but the origin is identical. Sometimes the name is identical; it is impossible not to connect the Greek Zeus with the Vedic Dyaus, both being gods of the clear sky, even though the first focuses the glory of Olympus, and the second is a pallid abstraction. Sometimes the two ideas have drifted so far apart that scholars¹ are provoked, here and there, into a denial of the original identity; as with two representatives of the starry sky, the Greek Uranus and the Indian Varuna. In the most instructive of these com-

¹ As Prof. Oldenberg, *Religion des Veda*, 1894.

parisons we depend entirely on the information of Sanscrit scholars; the name gives no help, and the naturalistic symbolism is lost. "Castor fleet in the car: Polydeukes good at the cestus"¹ appear, we are told, on Indian soil as saviour divinities,² bringing vigour to the feeble, sight to the blind, health to the sick. Their care extends even beyond the province of the healer; they are kinsmen to the kinless, they supply the lonely woman with a spouse, they save the fluttering bird from the jaws of the wolf. They seem an incarnation of universal compassion for every sentient creature. The declaration Macaulay has put on the lips of their Italian brothers—

"By many names men call us,
In many lands we dwell" -

thus receives a startling extension; and though none but a Sanscrit scholar can vindicate its authenticity, yet the mere student may recognise here an expression of the divergent genius of Greece and of India: the spirit of outward vigour, of athletic achievement on the one hand, and on the other, the miracles of compassion. The historic race idealises the hero, when the unhistoric worships a beneficent physician.

The Greek faith, from the first, glorified the outward. The Indian faith, from the first, transcended the outward. The spirit of Hellas strikes the keynote for all time, of what is a delight to the eye. Its genius was at once more artistic and more political than that of the Vedas; it turned to the world of human interest and gave the god parentage,

But the faith which glorifies the outward is profoundly divergent from that which seeks the invisible

¹ From Dr. Hawtrey's rendering of Helen's speech to Priam, *Il.* iii. 237.

² The twin deities whom Muller identifies with the Dioscuri, the Vedic Asvins, seem to represent the morning and evening twilight. The mere connection of the English words *twain* and *twilight* shows the naturalness of the idea; though there is some difficulty in carrying it out, and especially in associating it with benevolent deeds. Perhaps twilight which modern civilisation associates chiefly with the evening, had with the young race an association equally arbitrary and equally natural with the dawn.

³ Battle of Lake Regillus, *Lays of Ancient Rome*.

posterity, and a place in the divine Commonwealth. The kindred faith in the East, even when most vividly entering into the delights of the visible world, sought the invisible. It allied itself to no plastic art; its images remained images visible to the eager eyes which turned to the dawn, the blazing hearth, the storm cloud; but the animating personality did not clothe itself in the garb of humanity. To the Vedic Indian as to the Hebrew it seems to have been said, "Thou shalt make to thyself no graven image." In the flash which precedes the thunder and the downpour it saw the glittering spear of a great warrior, and adored Indra. In the flickering flame on the hearth it welcomed, as Agni, an ideal guardian of the home; in the sky of day with its focus of intense radiance and that of night with its countless points of brilliancy, it recognised the mighty twins, Mitra and Varuna. But none of these deities was a distinct person in the sense that Zeus or Apollo was. Dawn and sunset, summer and winter, overarching Heaven with its various and orderly changes, these things were not the canvas for an opalescent fancy to work upon. The idea of Deity shines so vividly through them that they need no transformation to gain symbolic meaning. Where the mythology of Greece is a gorgeous tapestry, that of India is a half transparent veil.

Symbolism
of light and
darkness.

Mythology covers the ground that religion has surrendered to art. The aspects of nature which once belonged to the region of worship have been in modern life annexed by the poet and the artist. But the surrender is incomplete. When we speak of

"The perfect vision of His face
Which we for want of words call Heaven,"¹

we return to the domain of mythology, for Heaven is the sky above us. "Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven" might well be the prayer of those who see in the

¹ Monckton Milnes (Lord Houghton).

orderly movements of the heavenly bodies the type of a deeper order after which the spirit of man must ever yearn till it be attained. The glow that revives and sustains life, and the light that reveals all nature, are more than metaphoric expressions for love and truth. Their symbolism, it in some respects less significant to the infant races of the world than to us (for all that we have learned of the science of light, and all that we have enjoyed of poetry and art, intensifies its significance), was enhanced to them by experiences which we have not known, and which we need to recall in order fully to appreciate the rapture and delight of their welcome to the God of day. To us a darkness which we can dispel at will, and which comes upon us amid the safety and conveniences of modern civilisation, though it cannot wholly discard the pristine symbolism, yet embodies it fitfully; darkness is to us a type as much of rest as of evil. But the dawn of a new day, to men who had no light but daylight, was the return into safety from a plunge into an abyss of peril, and the joy which hailed the morning must have gathered up into itself every association of deliverance and become the typical expression of all worship. The alternation of light and darkness would repeat the familiar imagery of conflict and associate the powers of nature with recollections of defeat and victory. The daily victory of light had its more gradual, more variable repetition in the return of spring, and the combat was represented in a more vivid form when from its prison in the dark thunder cloud the principle of light burst forth with dazzling suddenness. The hymns which greet the dawn express a joyous emotion of relief and thankfulness. The vivid sense of life finds its symbol in the birth of every new day out of darkness, and seems to pass into a sort of surprise that the recall into activity and consciousness welcomed by a slumbering earth should not penetrate to the world of the dead. "She awakens to movement all living,"¹

¹ *Rigveda*, i. 4, 9 (Ludwig).

and that wide picture of rising activity in which the human and animal worlds combine reminds the singer of its limitations. "Yet the dead she revives not."¹ How expressive of eager reverence is that exception! The goddess of the dawn might, it seems, be expected to have called back to life the inhabitants of the underworld. She wakens the sleepers on earth—why not sleepers below the earth? Light pursues its orderly and periodic victory over darkness; how is it that beside the transient shadow, from which life emerges refreshed and reinvigorated, we have this supreme darkness from which there is no dawn? These thoughts, or others allied to them, repeat themselves in dreams, and the dawn is invoked to banish them along with the other terrors of the night.² Her healing reviving power associated itself at once with the images of homely simple enjoyment, natural to a pastoral people, and the ideas of radiant beauty belonging to awakening powers in an unspoilt earth. The white radiance streams upon a world palpitating with welcome "as the milk is poured from the cow,"³ while the bold image, "with her advent the eye is born,"⁴ sets before us the recurrent vision of beauty which she seems almost as much to create as to reveal. Her approach is hymned in strains which form, as has been well said, "the poetical counterpart of Guido's Aurora."⁵ The gladness of her approach is symbolised by the kindling of the morning sacrifice, and to the imaginative ear of the worshipper the crackling flames greeted her with a joyous song,⁶ the flaming altar seeming to mirror and concentrate the flaming East. Agni, the god of fire, is a divinity equal in importance to Ushas, the goddess of Dawn. The discovery that human agency could replace the heat and the illumination of the midday sun, and enclose the germs of this warmth and brilliancy within the walls of a modest

¹ *Rigveda*, i. 5, 8 (Ludwig).

² *Ibid.* i. 125, 18.

³ *Ibid.* i. 9, 8.

⁴ *Ibid.* i. 16, 1.

⁵ By Dean Church, in the lectures cited above.

⁶ *Rigveda*, i. 18, 2 (Ludwig).

dwelling, must have been a recent memory when Agni was first worshipped; and the fact that we recall his name most expressively in the associations which gather round the Scotch *inglé* (a word from the same root) shows the significance of this tradition. The hearth would give the home a new meaning, and while that home was a detached, easily quitted building, would hardly suggest the terror-striking associations of fire in great cities. Agni was thus a wholly beneficent being, and the guardian of all that is most precious in the life of the family. As the Latin form of his name and such derivations as *ignite* prove, he is mainly the fire on the hearth and the altar, but this is rather one aspect of his agency than its exhaustive expression. He is the general principle of light and heat, and while on the altar he appears as the ideal priest, blessing the marriage bed and the babe, he flashes through the atmosphere as the lightning, and shines in the sky (the Vedic people distinguished the atmosphere and the sky) as the sun; "true to the kindred points of Heaven and home." The association of the light with all that is most worthy of reverence has remained ever since indelibly impressed upon the very structure of language. Heaven means both the light above us and the hope within us, and the earliest name of the divine beings is simply "the bright ones."¹ Such names are more than metaphor; they show how closely that which is without expresses and renders definite the yearnings within.

The darkness of night is never an absolute darkness. Such a phenomenon is in the natural world unknown. It enhances the horrors of the dungeon, it covers an imaginary underworld, but the difference between light and darkness, so far as ordinary experience extends, is a difference only of degree. The brilliant constellations of a cloudless and moonless midnight are but a remote and concentrated aspect of the light, the more impressive from their contrast with a darkened earth. What a wonderful and yet explicable

Lessons of
Night.

¹ Deva, originally bright, from the root *div*, preserved in our divine.

fascination there is in that blotting out of the familiar, that suggestion of the mysterious, which succeeds every sunset in a clear sky! With the twilight fades all that man has made, all that successive generations can remove or change; we lift our eyes to the same forms which recurrent darkness unveiled to eyes closed millenniums ago. Who can gaze at the glittering belt of Orion without a thrill of emotion at the thought that this very object met the eyes of the writer of the Book of Job? There are few at all events who have not sometimes felt with a poet of our day—

“When overarched by gorgeous night,
I wave my trivial self away :
When all I was to all men’s sight
Shares the erasure of the day—
Then do I cast my cumbering load,
Then do I gain a sense of God.”¹

Modern as is the tone of those lines, they find an echo in the worship of Vedic India. The Aryan dweller in the Punjaub would not look back as he gazed on Orion to a writer from whom he was separated by millenniums; but on the other hand he would be far more impressed than we are by the permanent scenery of the heavens amid the changing years, because to him they would present almost the only object of vision which was unchanged by any wanderings. “Overarched by gorgeous night” is indeed a description much more applicable to the agricultural and pastoral tribes of north-western India than to the inhabitants of cities, for whom the words suggest gas-lights rather than stars. “The constellations which we see by night, whither do they depart by day?”² asks a Vedic poet. The soft and yet definite brilliancy of the constellations, more impressive as well as more constantly visible through an Indian than through an English atmos-

¹ William Watson.

² *Rigveda*, i. 81, 10.

phere,¹ was reckoned as kindred with the dazzling daylight sky, and the idea of brotherhood which we have seen somewhat perplexingly developed in the Asvins found a more intelligible development in the twin deities of day and night. Mitra is one of the many representatives of the sun, while the dark blue of night with its golden embroidery is the "coverer," by which word we translate the Sanscrit Varuna, a deity in whom the naturalism of early religion passes over into spiritual significance more impressive than we find in any other. The connection with the night is significant. It is easy to understand that the scenery of the heavens would be to these early wanderers in an intimate and practical sense the expression and embodiment of law. The moon and the constellations, to them as familiar as the pattern on a wall paper to us, recorded and prefigured all that it was necessary to remember and anticipate. As the sunrise is to mankind at all times a type and a summons, so was every change in the heavenly bodies to them. The new moon would fix a date, the appearance or disappearance of a constellation would urge on some work of the fields, and the influence thus incorporated and registered would stand out as the monitor and regulator of their lives.

The god in whom this heavenly influence is impersonated, though he shrinks to insignificance in the later Indian religion, both embodies the order of the Cosmos without, and responds, as we have seen, to the yearnings which recoil from the chaos within. The guardian of law is necessarily the foe of the law-breaker, but the fact that most human beings have broken the law does not prevent his being the

The Holy
Order

¹ "These moonlight nights are truly lovely," wrote a young officer in the Punjab fifty years ago. "There is an utter peacefulness, a breathless repose about them, which sinks refreshingly on the languid spirits after the burning heat of the day. The skies, with their myriads of shining stars, are such as, even at home, I don't believe on our most beautiful evenings I have ever seen—a soft, gleaming, milky hue spreads over the firmament, in whose exceeding splendour the stars are almost lost, so vivid is the light which streams over the whole expanse of heaven" (*Journal of a Subaltern in the Punjab*, 1849)

friend of humanity. 'The word *Rita*,¹ expressing the order centred in Varuna, is erroneously but perhaps not misleadingly associated for modern ears with the word *right*. We may restore to the idea its original width of scope in recalling Wordsworth's address to Duty—

"Thou dost preserve the stars from wrong,
And the most ancient Heavens, through thee, are fresh and
strong."

In the sense in which Duty may be applied to the movement of the stars it translates *Rita*, and the Vedic prayer, "May we, O Varuna, increase the springs of law,"² is almost paraphrased by the English poet's invocation to the "awful power" who thus guards the order of the Universe, and whom he calls to the "humbler function" of directing a human soul. To increase the springs of law, is to diminish the fetters of law, to drive back anarchy and legalism, to enlarge at once the domain both of order and of liberty. In the Vedic period the time had not yet come when the actions of man are seen on a different plane from the events of nature; the recurrent sunrise and the recurrent season are not only patterns for man's activity, they are effects of the same cause. Varuna is at once the pervading spirit of the universe and the unseen companion of man. "He counts the winkings of men's eyes." "If two persons sit together and scheme, King Varuna is there as a third." But he is still an *Anima Mundi*. "Both this earth belongs to him and also yonder broad sky whose boundaries are far away, and he is hidden in this drop of water."³ The harmony is exactly Wordsworth's. The imagination of a poet restores the early grouping of humanity, and in blending the law

¹ "The word *Rita*," says Max Müller (*Lectures on the Origin and Growth of Religions as illustrated by the Religions of India*, 1882), "sounds like a deep keynote through all the chords of the religious poetry of India." It is the past participle of a word meaning to adapt, connected with *ἀπαρτῶ*.

² *Rigveda*, i. 83, 5.

³ *Atharvarveda, Sacred Books of the East*, vol. xlii. p. 88. "His spies," mentioned in the preceding verse, are the stars.

which cannot be broken with the law which cannot perfectly be kept recovers some pristine unity which we have lost. When the Vedic poet declares that "for him who follows Rita the path is smooth and thornless,"¹ he does not, in inclining towards the naturalistic significance of the idea of right, more traverse our experience of its ordinary associations than does his English successor when he declares that "Fragrance in thy footing treads." The path of Duty, we all know, is neither thornless nor at the moment fragrant. And yet if two poets, on the banks of the Indus and of the English lakes, have thus described it, their words were not empty of meaning. We may take them as a protest against that dislocation of our moral nature which makes their literal sense sound in our ears as bitter irony.

But Varuna, though the centre of the Holy Order, and the most purely spiritual divinity of Vedism, is not the typical divinity even of this early form of Hindu religion. For such a divinity we have to turn to the only Indian god whose name is familiar to Englishmen. From the naturalistic side it is fully explicable that Indra, the god of the storm, should be the main divinity of India. On his beneficence, as we are too sadly reminded by recurrent Indian famines, depends the life of its inhabitants. It is by the flash of his lightning spear that the black clouds, it was imagined, were forced to let loose their flow of longed-for water; the thunder was his shout of victory as he wrested the treasure from the foe. The description of a tropical storm takes naturally the language of mythology. "Twice," says one who well knew India,² "when the sun opened and beamed divinely upon us in a cloudless sky to

The storm
god.

¹ *Rigveda*, I. 93, 4.

² Col. Sleeman, *Rambles and Reminiscences of an Indian Official*. See also Mrs. Manling, *Life in Ancient India* (1869), i. 16. "Anxious multitudes watch the gradual gathering of the sky, as day by day the long array of clouds enlarges, but there is no rain until a rattling thunderstorm charges through their ranks, and the battered thunder-clouds are forced to let loose their impetuous showers."

the west, the wind changed suddenly round, and rushed back angrily from the east to fill up the space which had been quickly rarefied by the genial heat of its rays, till we were again enveloped in darkness. The thunder was loud and often startling to the strongest nerves, the lightning vivid and almost incessant." How few changes would adapt that account of a storm to an account of a battle! The use of anthropomorphic terms is no poetic device, but the mere transcript of natural impressions on the mind. Hence the god of the storm takes a vividness, a dramatic character, unknown to the gods of the sky or the hearth; he is a turbulent, roystering, Aristophanic being; he gets drunk; he seizes a niggardly worshipper by the foot, and dashes him on the rock. Still on the whole he is the friend and protector of the Aryan race, especially in their struggles with the dark-skinned original inhabitants of India, and possibly their dusky hue was not without its influence on ideas which ranged the warrior god against all that was allied with darkness. It is thus easy to conceive how the influence both of nature and of history tended to develop Indra's personality as the Aryan became Indian, and the god whose victory was yearly exhibited in the heavens established his worshippers in their Promised Land.

The active
divinity
attracts a
race of
quietists.

They were also attracted towards his worship by an influence deeper than either nature or history, or rather by one which includes both. For nature and history alike illustrate the truth that the attraction of contrast is stronger than the attraction of likeness. The bond of chemical affinity is more potent than that of gravitation. The love of brother for brother is not the strongest love we know. Those who have shared every experience since childhood, twins whom their kindred scarcely know apart, however warm their mutual affection, do not love each other as much as a man loves his wife. Some element of anti-thesis seems necessary to the strongest human love, and even, in some respects, to human worship. We may trace

within this early religion, as perhaps within all religion, a double ideal, answering to the attraction of the love of likeness and of unlikeness. That being whom we have seen implored as a superior, but yet adjured as a comrade in the human endeavour to enlarge the springs of order, is not the less a brother because he is a Monarch. The Vedic god of order typifies the love of brotherhood, as the Vedic god of conflict typifies the love of sex, and it is in accordance with the proportion of these two feelings in other circumstances that the god of conflict should become the national god. The object of Indian worship was a Divine Warrior, as the object of mediæval worship was a Divine Mother; what the incarnation of gentleness and purity was to the cruel and lawless, that the fierce tumultuous fighter was to a race more and more finding its ideal in resignation and repose.¹ To renounce rather than to achieve is the aim towards which India constantly approaches, and the Divinity which incorporates an ideal precisely opposite is at once a record of the past, and the testimony to an impulse knowing nothing of past or future.

As the Indian spirit advances towards quietism it turns to a warrior god; as it advances towards Pantheism it turns towards an anthropomorphic god. The god of order grows dim as the idea of order expands and dilutes itself to include all being. Varuna belongs, like Uranus, to a class of "elder gods" superseded by a new rule. The contest between Indra and Varuna seems decided by the adhesion of Agni to the cause of one whom, if we may judge from a very obscure hymn in the *Rigveda*, we must consider a usurper. "In declaring myself for Indra," says

A revolution in the Heavens

¹ Indra is the characteristically Indian god. There is no question of his correspondence with any foreign divinity, not even with any object of the closely allied Persian worship. More hymns are addressed to him in the *Rigveda* than to any other god, and to this day his festival is celebrated in Southern India on their New Year's Day, says Dr. Broadwood in his *Handbook to the Industrial Arts of India*, p. 65, "as the Christmas and Whitsuntide of Europe made into one."

Agni, "I abandon the Father (Varuna). The revolution is accomplished, I take part with the younger deities." His choice decides the issue, which his accession secures to the new-comers. But from the throne of the usurper issues the proposal of compromise. "The Asuras¹ have lost their power," says Indra. "But if thou lovest me, O Varuna, become the lord of my kingdom, distinguishing the just from the unjust." How graciously does the conqueror invite the conquered to exchange, as we may say, a temporal for a spiritual kingdom. The elder gods in Greek mythology find no such generous antagonist. Are the two narratives varied versions of the same original? Perhaps only in the sense that all mythology and all religion exhibit the changes of earth as vicissitudes in the Divine world. As a distant fire at night throws a glow upon the clouds, so the new emotions of human evolution are reflected upon the Heaven of man's worship, and he seems to adore a new Divinity while he recognises a new capacity, or a new need.

and in
Indian
thought.

The extract given above may be regarded as an anticipation, within the first chapter of the Indian Bible—the *Rig-veda* is no more than this—of a change between it and the last chapter, manifesting, probably, the most striking spiritual development exhibited by a single race in the whole history of the world. Seldom indeed does a national literature permit such a comparison. Egypt, at any rate, the only other country whose records would allow of a millennium for the transformation, presents nothing sufficiently analogous to be called even dissimilar. The hymns sung by the Aryans in the Punjaub reveal to us an exuberant enjoyment in the world of Nature, a fearless appropriation of all its good things, a simple appeal to the Divine powers to bestow them.

¹ *Rigveda*, x. 124, 2-5, translation given in *La Religion Védique*, par Abel Bergaigne, p. 145. See also pp. 146-147. "Indra, qui a détroné Varuna, lui offre une sorte de compensation . . . d'une autorité purement morale." Asura is in the Vedic period, the most august name for a Divinity, and becomes later, by a curious change, the official name for a demon. Here it seems to occupy an intermediate position.

The mystic treatises composed in the valley of the Ganges, and known as the *Upanishads*, present the reader with a state of mind as unlike all this as possible. Yet this transition was not a revolution; we hear nothing of struggle; we come upon no denunciations of misleading teachers; we only follow what must be accepted as the gradual discovery of an ideal. The earlier phase affords little clue to the subsequent path of development. As the sudden flush of May greenery and blossom tells us more of a particular time, and the monotonous colouring and sparser blossoms of midsummer leaves us more at liberty to observe the characteristics of a particular place, so it is with the life of man. Children are more alike than their elders, and the songs of an early people bear the stamp of national youth too deeply impressed not to be sometimes misleading in their suggestions as to national character. Apart from this recollection, and from that which accompanies it of the immense interval foreshortened by the blank of Indian history, we should be bewildered by the contrast between the Indian scriptures we have been studying hitherto and those to which we have now to turn. We might sum up this contrast by saying that the religion of India starts in the worship of the Light and ends in the worship of the Night. The change from the flush and stir of dawn to the repose of a dark earth beneath a starry heaven well symbolises the contrast of glad outwardness and childlike vivacity in the psalms of the *Rig-veda*, and the depths of mystic contemplation reached by the prose treatises not more different in form than in spirit, with which the canon of Indian scripture closes.

Modern attention has inverted the chronological order of these scriptures. The *Upanishads* formed the introduction of the West to the East, and first kindled in the Teutonic world that interest in Sanscrit literature which enlarged the bounds of our intellectual horizon in the last century almost as much as they were enlarged three centuries earlier by the fall of Constantinople and the ensuing acquaintance

Yearning
for unity

with Greek. The little peninsula of the West must always retain a pre-eminence in the world of thought which the vast peninsula in the East can but remotely approach, but the several epochs at which the literature of each dawned upon the modern world are not unworthy of comparison. "It is by the *Upanishads*,"¹ says the writer who has done most to make ordinary English readers know India—Max Müller—"that my love for Sanscrit literature was first kindled;" and he goes on to cite an even stronger tribute from a fellow-countryman, whose name is not in the same way associated with Sanscrit literature. "If the reader has received the benefit of the Vedas,"² wrote Schopenhauer in 1818, "the access to which by means of the *Upanishads* is in my eyes the greatest benefit this century may claim, he will be prepared in the best way for hearing what I have to say . . . This study has been the solace of my life, it will be that of my death." The knowledge that reflections and aspirations expressed three millenniums ago in an Indian forest have found an echo in a German thinker of the last century is enough to invite attention to writings which had no other claim. But in addition these may be said to anticipate in spirit two movements of thought strikingly hostile to each other. The mystic depths of mediæval theology, and the "Cosmic emotion" of modern science, are both recalled to their student. This latest book of Indian revelation expresses that yearning after Unity which creates Religion in those who feel and Science in those who think. Where the Indian gives a voice to this deep human yearning he closely approaches outpourings familiar to Christian ears; many

¹ He has done much to pass on that love in his initiation of the English translation of the *Sacred Books of the East*, a series to which I desire to express the deepest indebtedness, and to which I could almost say anything of value in this and the following chapter is owing. The *Upanishads* are vols. i. and xv. of the series.

² The *Veda* must be understood simply as what an English theological writer means when he speaks of Scripture. We have hitherto been occupied with the *Rigveda*, a portion so large and important as sometimes to be confused with the whole.

a passage needs little change to pass as an utterance from the teacher whom many generations have learnt to know as Thomas à Kempis. "He who beholds all beings in the Self and the Self in all beings, what sorrow, what trouble can there be to him?"¹ Change "the Self" to God, and the sentence might be interpolated in a page of the *Imitation of Christ* without discovery, while there are sentences in the *Imitation* which might with similar change be interpolated in the *Upanishads*. "It wearieth me often to read and hear many things. In Thee is all that I would have and can desire." The change from it to Thee is significant, yet in this turning from the dizzying outward to the repose of the inward we have the true genius of Indian thought. "There is no image of Him whose name is Great Glory, no one perceives Him with the eye. The wise who discern Him abiding in the heart within their Self, to them belongs eternal peace." "The wise, when he knows that by which he perceives all objects in sleep or waking to be the great omnipresent self, grieves no more. He who knows this living soul as being the Self, always near, the Lord of the past and future, henceforward fears no more."² The chasm of two millenniums and of a quarter of the globe surface is bridged by that yearning after the reality beneath the shifting hurry of appearances. The deep inwardness of mystic theology comes out in these Indian writings with vivid contrast to the outwardness and variety of the early nature worship, but without any distinct recoil from it. The early Aryans had seen God in the sunny and the starry sky, in the dawn, in the thunder-storm, in all the various and ever-changing aspects of Nature. Their Indian sons rejected nothing of this earlier revelation when they turned from the variety of the visible world and discovered within the soul a truer interpreter of the Divine. Indra, Ushas, Agni, under this new aspect

¹ *Upanishads*, S. B. E. xv. 312.

² *Ibid.* xv. 15.

appeared but as the rainbow transformation of the pure and colourless Light. "Each God is His manifestation, for He is all Gods." The inheritors of men who had worshipped the dawn, the fire, the thunderstorm, awoke to the discovery that all these things conceal God as much as they reveal Him. Men must not look for the revelation of His presence to the glory of the sunrise and the storm; He can only be recognised there when He has been discovered elsewhere; He must be sought within the mystery of consciousness, and discovered as that which gives unity to the soul of man.

leads from
the external
to the
internal
world.

"As one finds lost cattle by following their steps," says a writer whose comment is embodied in these Indian scriptures, "thus one finds out everything if one has found out the Self."¹ His meaning becomes clear to the reader who will analyse the idea of Unity. Nothing in the lifeless world can be truly called *one*. A stone has no unity; break it and each of its halves is as much one as it was itself. Fire has no unity; a hundred candles may be lighted from it and leave it undiminished. Apart from life, oneness is something imposed from without, like the oneness of a constellation. There is no principle of affinity in brick and timber whereby they constitute a house; they owe their oneness to the aim of the architect. An object is one in any sense only in so far as it is the result of purpose, or else partakes in the principle of life. There is a dawning unity in the vegetable world—a tree is in some sense one, but it is in an incomplete sense; we do not mutilate the oak or elm from which we remove a branch. Man reaches the idea of typical unity only when he says "I." It is the unity of consciousness, the one in the subject, opposed to the multitude of objects, which is the starting-point of the idea. We reach the one when we find the *self*. But the moment we reach the consciousness of self, we reach the consciousness of other selves. If the idea of oneness be attained only when each of us says

¹ *Upanishads*, S. B. E. xv. 87.

"I," at the same moment we attain the idea of multiplicity. *I* implies *them*. "La pluralité des consciences," says an acute thinker, "est un postulat que l'on peut considérer comme acquis à la science sans démonstration."¹ The most consistent sceptic does not doubt the existence of other men. He does not question the testimony which suggests many unities without similar to the unity which he feels within. How much of what we mean by Faith is involved in this acceptance is evident only when we discern that it is a step towards a larger faith. "What is done by what is called myself,"² said one who has enlarged our ideas of the physical universe, "is, I feel, done by something larger than myself." The sense of personality is an index to something beyond the unity of the individual person. As that sense is the starting-point of our idea of oneness, so it is discerned to be only a starting-point. There was a time before any individual man could say "I." Was there then no Unity in the Universe? As we ask the question we approach the point of view of the Indian mystic who discerned that—"As those who know not the country walk unconsciously over a buried treasure, so is it with the true Self."³ The Kingdom of Heaven, we remember, is "a treasure hid in a field." We learn the meaning of our own Scriptures by such approximations; the words which have faded into formulas flash into life when we find them translated into another tongue and receive them as an utterance of humanity.

From such utterances we may also learn to interpret others belonging to a region most widely remote from any form of Religion. Unity is the craving of the intellect as of the spirit of Man; more obviously and unmistakably the craving of his intellect than of his spirit. In every epoch of moral expansion, Religion, penetrating to a deeper stratum of feeling, has rooted that ideal of Unity more profoundly;

Analogy
of Indian
religion and
modern
Science.

¹ Paul Janet, *Problèmes du XIX. Siècle*, p. 313.

² Clerk Maxwell.

³ *Upanishads*, S. B. B. i. 129.

but a root is hidden, and the deeper it is, the more inaccessible. In every epoch of intellectual expansion, Science, spreading over a wider surface, has given that ideal wider illustrations and more intelligible and unforgettable proof. Within the memory of persons still living Science might be termed Polytheistic. It registered and brought into orderly sequence the results of the so-called "imponderable agencies"—Light, Heat, and Electricity—as the *Rigveda* celebrated the powers of the early deities, Agni, Varuna, Indra. When the idea of the correlation of forces rose upon the horizon of thought, Light, Heat, and Electricity were recognised as different aspects of Energy, in the same way as Agni, Varuna, Indra were recognised as different aspects of that central Unity which the seers of the *Upanishads* knew as the Self. The two groups of thinkers are divided by three millenniums of years; they belong to different civilisations, different regions of the globe; they are absorbed in divergent and antagonistic objects of thought. Yet we may say of both that they follow out the teaching hidden in the idea of Self. For what has given Science its new-found Unity, and infused so mighty a stimulus into the study of the external world, is the fact that Will, the core of personality, has mirrored itself in that world. Force is something we can only construe to imagination through our experience of muscular exertion, the symbol and associate of Will.¹ Energy is something conceivable to our minds only as the personality lying behind Will. It is a loan from the personal which has impressed the impersonal world with its new character of Unity. As

¹ "Our notion of force is a generalisation of those muscular sensations which we have when we are ourselves the producers of changes in outward things. . . . The liberty we have to think of light, heat, sound, &c., as in themselves different from our sensations of them, is due to our possession of other sensations by which to symbolise them—namely, those of mechanical force. But if we endeavour to think of mechanical force itself as different from our impression of it, there arises the unsurmountable difficulty that there is no remaining species of impression to represent it. All other experiences being represented to the mind in terms of this experience, this experience cannot be represented in any terms but its own" (Herbert Spencer, *Psychology*).

the reconciliation of Patrician and Plebeian was followed by the victorious career of Rome, so this unifying of all natural force has given the investigation of Nature new rights and new powers. To regard all phenomena with impartial attention; to track the operation of one law throughout the universe, treating any seeming exception as a clue to its wider range, whatever structures must be levelled to give it passage—this is now for the first time recognised as the function and the right of Science; and the new liberty is signalised by a new imaginative delight. The anthropomorphism of modern Science answers to the Pantheism of ancient India; but whereas for the modern naturalist God melts into Nature, for the ancient seer it was Nature which melted into God. "Thou art youth, thou art maiden, thou art woman, thou art man, thou as an old man totterest along on thy staff. Thou art the dark blue bee, thou art the green parrot with red eyes, thou art the thunder-cloud, the seasons, the seas."¹ This stammering hurry of enumeration, this suggestion of the great All in specimens taken at random, corresponds to the "Cosmic emotion" of our own time, and may do something to explain its fervour to those who otherwise have little sympathy with it.

The Pantheism of Ancient India, as the Science of modern Europe, was antagonistic to a belief in Creation. The Indian seer gazed backwards into the dim dawn of the Universe, and saw that "Being was not yet, nor Not-Being; the atmosphere did not exist, nor the firmament above it. Where then was the world? Where were the waters, the gulf which no plummet may sound?"² Death was not yet, nor therefore could there be immortality; night and day (their earthly types) "were indistinguishable." Only one belief was positive—the primal unity must have been there already. "A breath arose self-moved; it was the One;

India
awakens to
recognise
its ideal.

¹ *Upanishads*, S. B. E. xv. 249, 250.

² *Rigveda*, x. 129, quoted in the *Essais Orientaux* of James Darmesteter. In this writer, he says, "Pascal eût reconnu un frère, Spinoza lui eût tendu la main."

The
Creator.

there was nothing beside that One, nor above it. All was darkness. Enveloped in night, the Universe was but an indistinct wave. Whence came the ray which gave shape to the world? . . . Who knows? Who can say whence issued this creation? The gods are younger; who then can declare its birth, or say whether it had a Creator? He who from the height of the world surveys the world, He knows;—or perhaps even He knows it not.” A reach of Agnosticism beyond the furthest range of modern Agnostics. God, it seems, is so far from being the Creator that He is not even cognisant of the fact of Creation. Such a belief has great moral significance. The world of incident lacks the initial event which associated God with the activity of man; activity was as little a part of the human ideal as of Divine reality. Long before Gautama Buddha was born, Nirvana had become the ideal of India. Every step that the Aryans took from their starting-point on the Five Rivers towards their home in Hindostan seems to have coincided with a similar progress from the spirit of hopeful energy manifested in the *Rigveda* towards the mystic quietism and mournful resignation of their later religious development. Buddhism itself must be considered separately; its spirit was different. We have first to confront a change that long preceded it—a change not in the same way centred in an individual personality, and needing some explanation which it is not easy to supply. Doubtless the mere change of abode, bringing the race under the influence of a tropical climate, and thus intensifying the joy of repose, would go for something; for how much is a question to which students would give different answers. But we possibly discover some material for this explanation in suggesting a spiritual cause for the contrast between the earlier and later phases of Indian religion. The interval between the earliest songs of the *Rigveda* and the *Upanishads* chronicles an event of momentous significance—the separation of the Aryan race into two branches,

one of which exhibits the active, vivid spirit shown in the early hymns, and with it a strong and definite sense of the conflict of Good and Evil, while the other plunged deeper and deeper into the repose and resignation of Pantheism. If we may say that in the ferment of this early development divergent impulses were dimly felt before they were practically recognised, and the seekers after Unity saw their own ideal more clearly as they repudiated that of the preachers of Dualism, we should gain a clue to a perplexing transformation in the spirit of India.¹

In this clash of two ideals we may again trace some analogy between the far and near; we may, at all events, recognise in the divergence of two races, at the dawn of history, some resemblance between that of two creeds, within living memory. We have seen the moral transformation from a belief in Creation to a belief in Evolution. The Aryan race in Asia, if we have rightly augured the path of its development, experienced this change in an opposite direction. How far it proved a dividing line of actual movement, and left two peoples where it found one—this we are not allowed by historians to affirm; but it is certain that with the conception of Will at the root of existence, is inseparably bound up a sense of the distinction between good and evil. The belief in a Creation, for the inhabitants of such a world as we see around us, implies the belief in a Fall. The belief in Evolution needs no such appendix. The *How* swallows up the *Why*. Good is nowhere absolute, and nowhere wholly lacking. Good

Moral influence of
idea of
Evolution.

¹ The view given above was strongly affirmed by Dr. Martin Haug (*Essays on the Sacred Language of the Parsis*, 2nd ed., 1878, ed. by E. W. West), and his arguments do not seem to me to have been satisfactorily answered, but the theory is given up by most scholars. The early separation of the Indian and Persian races, their religious antagonism, and the strong stamp of reaction on the younger religion are at all events matters of ascertained history, and this affords adequate ground for the suggestion that the moral descendants of the early singers are to be found rather on Persian than Indian soil, and that the recoil from Pantheism had some connection with the separation.

and Evil are present in a confused mixture; there is no supreme light, no blackness of shadow, but a diffused daylight, darker or lighter according to circumstances, never hopeless and never supremely hopeful. The spirit that is associated with Evolution as we have known it in modern Europe is, for the ordinary run of mankind, naturally optimistic. A generation which has watched the transformation of the world under the magic touch of Science, and looks forward to an infinite expansion of its beneficent influence, is naturally led to a hopeful and encouraging view of human destiny, on the whole. Such a view, however, is by no means universal amid the civilisation of our modern world, and we may teach ourselves to sympathise with the profound sadness of Indian thought by listening to what might appear its echo in modern literature.

Two
modern
Pessimists.

Nothing can be more dissimilar than the starting-point of the two writers from whom we extract the following paragraphs, while the paragraphs themselves are so similar that if quotation marks were withdrawn we should never discover the change of author. "Starting from the being of a God," says a devout Anglican,¹ led to Rome by a relentless logic, "I look out of myself into the world of men, and there I see a sight which fills me with unspeakable distress. The world seems simply to give the lie to that great truth of which my being is so full; and the effect upon me is in consequence, of necessity, as confusing as if it denied that I am in existence myself. If I looked into a mirror and did not see my face, I should have the sort of feeling which actually comes upon me when I look upon this living busy world, and see no reflection of its Creator. . . . To consider the world in its length and breadth, its various history, the many races of men, their mutual alienation, their conflicts, their enterprises, their random achievements and acquirements, the impotent conclusion of long-standing facts, the

¹ J. H. Newman, *Apologia pro Vita Sua*, 1864.

tokens so faint and broken of a superintending design—the greatness and littleness of man, his far-reaching aims, his short duration—the disappointments of life, the defeat of good, the success of evil, physical pain, mental anguish, the prevalence and intensity of sin, the pervading idolatries, the corruptions, the dreary hopeless irreligion, that condition of the whole race, so fearfully yet exactly described in the Apostle's words, 'having no hope, and without God in the world'—all this is a vision to dizzy and appal; and inflicts upon the mind the sense of a profound mystery, absolutely beyond human solution." "The life of every individual," says a German philosopher, scornful to all religion, "if we survey it as a whole and in general . . . is really always a tragedy;"¹ but "the deeds and vexations of the day, the restless irritation of the moment, the desires and fears of the week, the mishaps of every hour are all through chance, which is ever bent upon some jest, scenes of a comedy. Thus as if fate would add derision to the misery of our existence, our fate must contain all the woes of tragedy, and yet we cannot even assert the dignity of tragic characters, but in the broad detail of life must inevitably be the foolish characters of a comedy."

It is an instructive comment on the passage that when Hamlet declares the "dread of something after death" to be the real barrier against suicide, his creator seems to express through him the ordinary uninteresting troubles of humanity.

"The insolence of office and the spurns
That patient merit of the unworthy takes"

are not the woes of a prince, or of any exceptional character. Newman, Schopenhauer, Shakespeare—here we have witnesses, sufficiently various, to the widespread belief that human existence, apart from some transfiguring hope, can endure no steady gaze.

¹ Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Idea*.

India the
home of
Pessimism.

When we turn from these utterances of Newman and Schopenhauer to Indian philosophy, we seem to turn from a finely developed exotic to the plant on its native soil. An Englishman or a German, while he may agree with such descriptions of human destiny—the majority would not go even so far—would consider that the misery of the world is no object for human contemplation apart from some attempt to relieve it. To the Indian mind the opposite was true. We find in both the great religions of India—in Buddhism as much as in Brahmanism—that the futility and wretchedness of human life is regarded as an object for religious contemplation. “The ascetic,” says an Indian law book, “must reflect on the transitoriness of the passage through mundane existence,¹ upon the destruction of beauty by old age, the pain arising from disease bodily and mental, on the ignorance and dependence of childhood, the anxieties of youth, on the union with those whom we hate and separation from those whom we love, on the fearful agonies of hell, and those that have to be suffered in the passage of the soul through the bodies of animals and plants. And that there is no pleasure to be met with in this never-ceasing passage of the soul through human existence, and that even what is called pleasure is transient, and the cause of pain to those who are cut off from it.” “Everything, O monks, is burning,” said Buddha² to his disciples, long ages after those words were written, at the sight of a conflagration. “The sensation produced by contact with visible things is burning with the fire of lust, enmity and delusion, with birth, decay, death, grief, lamentation, pain, dejection and despair. The mind is burning, thoughts are burning. All are burning with the fire of passions and lust. Observing this, O monks, a wise and noble disciple becomes weary of the eye, weary of visible things, weary of the ear, weary of sounds, weary of the body,

¹ *Laws of Manu*, vi, 61, 62 (*S. B. E.* xxv. 209, 210, but here from another translation).

² *S. B. E.* xiii. 134.

weary of the mind." How far is this world weariness from the free and buoyant spirit of the *Rigveda*! Far indeed in time, for they may be three millenniums apart; far also, probably, in space, for Buddhism takes us far away from the Punjab—but further yet in that spiritual atmosphere which makes the life of life. We have lost sight of the expansive joyousness and energy of the early hymns; we have reached that depth of mournfulness, glorified by resignation, which is the spiritual goal of India.

As we reach that goal, our review lands us on the perplexing phenomenon of Asceticism. We should not have expected it in union with the sentiments of despairing resignation, and then again of rapturous Pantheism, depicted above. Both alike seem alien from the spirit which demands self-inflicted suffering. But those who know little else of the life of India know that it is the native land of Ascetics. It needs a certain resolution even to confront in imagination the torments there voluntarily endured, and one shrinks from describing some of them. The same man has been seen motionless in the same spot, with his face turned towards the fierce Indian sun, at an interval of sixteen years. The recollection of marred distorted figures, the arms stiffened into one attitude, the nails grown through the hand, has haunted the imagination of those who could recall childhood in India. Asceticism, in its Brahminic form, which is its extreme form, was an attempt to invert the magnets of desire, to make an aim of what is hated, to find a point of departure in what is loved. When transformed as it is in Buddhism, to the simpler aim of renunciation, it seems to lose the right to its name; but the life of Buddha is not the only record whence we may be led to suspect that this last is in reality the more arduous endeavour of the two. We have all heard of the "Great Renunciation" whereby Buddha wrenched himself from the neighbourhood of his dearest, quitting the bedside of his sleeping wife and new-born infant without the parting

Indian
Asceticism.

embrace for which his soul yearned; perhaps we might find an even greater renunciation in that breach with the past, whereby he renounced the life of an Ascetic and the reverence of India. To alienate disciples may be even a deeper sacrifice than to tear oneself from wife and child. But it is more hidden, and we consider the power of Asceticism best in its more obvious forms.

Asceticism
and log.c.

Asceticism is a distorted shadow of that sense of failure, of futility, of misery, which we see in such spirits as Newman and Schopenhauer in Europe, and which we may call the spiritual atmosphere of India. It is not a logical outcome of this state of mind; it is a surprising phenomenon anywhere; and if we were not so familiar with the fact we should be especially surprised at its presence in Christianity. Seeing that almost the only occasions on which it is mentioned by Christ were when its neglect among His disciples or its opposite in Himself had been made a reproach to His teaching, that His greatest disciple especially declares that it "profiteth little," and that the use of wine is a part of Christian ritual, we might have anticipated that suffering should be accepted by Christians with entire resignation to the Will which has appointed it, but never sought by them. Here, as often, History is no friend to Logic. We could more easily explain than deny that choice of conditions unendurable to ordinary feeling which is typified by Simon Stylites, remaining on his shadeless eminence under a Syrian sun for half a century. There was a magnet for him and such as him in conditions which would have rendered life unendurable to most persons. Vast indeed is the power of sacrifice. It is renunciation which attracts. The experience of it is sometimes very different from the imagination, and it is vain to deny that like much other human experience sacrifice is disappointing. But the course of the world's history proves also that its attraction is undying. In every age, under every aspect, we find the invi-

tation still kindling a mystic hope which no disappointments can altogether extinguish. Even when men have turned aside and given themselves to the world, if they have for a moment known this aspiration they feel in their heart of hearts that nothing can replace it. Even in our practical, bustling English world, the idea of renunciation commands wide and immediate sympathy; any fiction which describes it becomes at once popular with the largest class of readers; and any practical life which seems to embody it attracts much aspiration, and gains some adherents. Explain it as we may, we have to confess that however triumphant in practice may be the temptation to enjoy, the invitation to renounce touches a part of human nature of which the greater depth does something to compensate for the narrower diffusion. Few may be ready to practise self-denial, but as long as those few give the many who admire it an ideal, Asceticism must be reckoned with as a power.

How are we to explain this inversion of desire? What strange influence so remoulds our being that natural impulse should be read backwards? Such an influence does exist; it has been active on the lives of thousands; it must be capable of explanation. It becomes explicable as we dwell upon its perplexity. Confronted with an eclipse we know that the dark body gives us the position of the hidden light. The obstacle, could we pierce it, would become a gateway. Asceticism is this conviction in practice. With this confidence the ascetic flings himself on Pain as on the barrier that hides the Divine; he seeks God on the other side of that which blots out His light. For Pain hides God, for the moment, as even sin does not hide Him; and in the point of uttermost resistance the ascetic discovers the magnet of a final victory. He feels the recoil of the flesh an inverted guide to the home of the spirit, and plunging into the flood which drowns natural desire, trusts to emerge in a triumph of that which is above nature. And if his trust were altogether vain, we cannot

The meaning of Asceticism.

think that his faith would be as long lived as it has proved itself.

Buddhist
Asceticism.

This explanation, or something equivalent to it, must be accepted by every one who would understand the life of India, for of that life the ascetic spirit is an integral portion. When we come to a study of the Epics we shall realise its wide-reaching influence, but we must dwell for a moment on the ascetic element in that form of Indian religion which rejected Asceticism as a definite aim. For in truth Buddhism presents us with a purer specimen of true Asceticism than any other religion known to us. The life of a Buddhist monk, supported on a few spoonfuls of curry given in answer to a mute appeal, and knowing no possessions but a bowl, a strainer for liquids, a needle and a few rags, might perhaps seem endurable in contrast to the self-chosen torments of Indian ascetics; but this absolute discarding of every gratification whatever was to be carried out with no hope of reward, here or hereafter. It was not only this life, but all life, which was to be surrendered, or we may rather say to be discarded as a heavy burden. Here the pessimism of India attains its summit, and in the very act of abdicating all ascetic pretension, realises the ascetic ideal in its truest expression. "This is another link I shall have to break," said Buddha, when he heard of the birth of his son, and the remark is a clue to his whole life. It was a life of renunciation; of stripping away, one after another, the bonds which give life its preciousness. The position of a rich landowner, of a Kschatriya, of a husband and father—all were to be as if they were not; the only position retained was that of a member of humanity. Perhaps the event in Buddha's life which most testifies to the true nature of his asceticism is the manner of his death. "A shrewd old Christian," says a missionary,¹ "more fond of disputing on religion than of

¹ Bishop Bigandet (Pierre), *The Life or Legend of Gaudama, the Buddha of the Burmese*, 1866. An interesting and sympathetic account.

paying regard to the practices thereof," used to boast of having at his command deadly weapons against Buddhism. The chief one which "he always brought forward with a Brahminical scorn and laugh was that Gautama had died from his having eaten pork. He always did it with so much mirth and wit that his poor ignorant adversaries were completely overawed and effectually silenced by his bold and positive assertion." The shrewd old Christian was a spiritual son of those Pharisees who said, "Behold a man gluttonous and a wine-bibber." Gautama, since he opposed the taking of life, was probably a vegetarian; at any rate the meal would be unsuited to a person of eighty years of age and his way of living, but pork had been provided by a goldsmith who asked him to dinner, and he avoided mortifying the feelings of his host by rejecting his "excellent fare," as he described it in a gracious message to the latter, sent almost with his last breath. The account authenticates itself at once; no disciple would invent the story of a saint having died of indigestion. Its witness to the influence of the spirit which decides that when a choice must be made between inflicting and enduring discomfort and annoyance, it is on the second alternative that choice shall fall, may obscure any other; but all that is best in Asceticism is connected with that spirit. In Buddhism, all was cut away but the duties and the claims of humanity as such. Forgiveness, compassion, benevolence, the renunciation of all hatred, all resentment—these were all his gospel; and these were enough to attract a number of disciples greater, it has been said, than those of all other religious teachers put together. We need not scrutinise the exaggeration, if exaggeration it be. It is enough to recognise it as a statement in order to feel and accept its significance, even with any inaccuracy which may be found in it. Buddha provided for all mankind an exhibition of the power inherent in what the intellect can recognise only as negative. As we look on the vast weights raised by the waters that rush in to fill a vacuum we may discern a

material type of the spiritual forces at the service of emptiness. Christianity bears witness to that truth, no less than does the faith which in so many respects seems a reflection of Christianity. But in Buddhism the witness stands apart from the supreme hope of Christianity, and yet stands firm.

Buddhism
at once the
goal of
Indian
religion
and the
object of
its most
vehement
recoil.

In such a creed with all its limitations, the genius of India seemed at first, and for long, to recognise its ideal. It had always sought to renounce this life, to dwell in this world as a pilgrim and stranger, to abjure its joys, to live beyond its sorrows. In Buddhism it was confronted with a religion carrying this ideal a step further; it was not this life, but all life, of which Buddha demanded the surrender; and this surrender was accepted for a time as the goal of Indian aspiration. Buddhism had its Constantine,¹ its Nicæa; it was for a thousand years the established Church of India. A thousand years in the history of this race is but as one day. Brahmanism again lifted its head; its rival was driven to find a home amid Turanian races. But the triumph is in some respects illusory. Brahmanism triumphed by absorbing the spirit of the religion it expelled, and when the Arab conqueror swept down upon it with the impetus of that religion which may be called the apotheosis, as Hinduism is the abdication, of Will-force, the Indian world lay prone before the wave of invasion. Since that day, although India has always been submerged by the civilisation of some alien race, it has not returned to the religion which it cherished for a millennium, and which we might have imagined one specially suited to the life of a subject race. The north and south of India—Nepaul and Ceylon—keep a record of the banished faith, but within the slopes of the Himalayas and the arm of the southern sea there are no Indian Buddhists.

Analogy of
Buddhism
with Chris-
tianity

The paradox that the ideal of a particular race must be

¹ Asoka, called Piyadasi on his inscriptions, emperor over Northern India in the third century B.C., who summoned the great Buddhist council in B.C. 242, the first date both important and approximately certain in the history of India. This council settled the canon of Buddhist Scripture.

sought in a religion which that race rejected, should not present insurmountable difficulties to any reader, acquainted with the Christian Scriptures, for whatever he may think of their meaning or authority, he must recognise in reading the Old Testament that the noblest poetry of a race may enshrine the description of a character which, when embodied in an individual, that race rejects. In these words we point out one of the most striking resemblances of Buddhism and Christianity. Both religions have moulded a race alien from that among which they arose. The Christian peoples are non-Semitic; the Buddhist peoples are non-Aryan. Buddhism has been as much detested in India as Christianity in Palestine. The Jewish acceptance of Christ commemorated on Palm Sunday was transient; the Indian acceptance of Buddha, though it endured for more than a millennium, was not permanent. In the development of nations a thousand years may be as one day. India has no consciousness of time. Buddha completed her ideal, purified it from inconsistency, exhibited it as a practical and logical reality, yet she cast out Buddhism. It is not a more perplexing rejection than that of the race which enshrined in its sacred Scriptures the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, and rejected Christ.

Buddhism is Brahmanism minus the spirit of caste and plus the spirit of missionary zeal. In the substance of the religion there was nothing new. The Indian grandee who more than two millenniums ago, moved by the spectacle of human misery, quitted his home, his parents, his wife, and his infant son, in order to lead the life of a mendicant, becoming as truly as St. Francis the consort of poverty, was but one of those ascetics who had from immemorial time wandered homeless in India. His belief in transmigration, the explanation of the gospel of Nirvana, was shared by him with other Indian teachers; the only novelty in his position was that he sought to communicate the truth of salvation to all who would listen. "Let a man overcome anger by love,

Buddhism
in Brah-
manism.

evil by good, the greedy by liberality, the liar by truth.”¹ “All men fear death; remember that you are like them, and do not kill.”² “Hatred does not cease by hatred, hatred ceases by love.”³ “If one man conquer a thousand times a thousand men, and another conquer himself, he is the greatest.”⁴ “Not even a god could change into defeat the victory over self.”⁵ He who has given up victory is happy. “The fault of others is easily perceived; a man winnows his neighbour’s faults like chaff, but his own he hides as a cheat hides the bad die from the gambler.”⁶ “He is a true Brahman who is tolerant with the intolerant, mild with fault-finders, and free from passion among the passionate.”⁷ These Buddhist precepts, the most characteristic among the few which reach back, traditionally, to the time of Gautama himself, are indistinguishable from the precepts of Brahmanism. When we pass from them to the Brahminic code of India we seem only to have turned a page. “A Kschatriya must duly protect this whole world;” he is bound to respect weakness, to pity even cowardice. “When he fights with his foes in battle, let him not strike with concealed or poisoned weapons, or the points of which are blazing with fire.” The highest duty of a king is the protection of his people.⁸ The ascetic Brahman must bear a reproachful spirit with patience, must speak reproachfully to no man; abused he must speak mildly, he must be to all the pattern of patience, high-mindedness, and spiritual devotion.⁹ A much greater difference may be found between two books of the Old or

¹ *S. B. E.* x, 59. From the *Dhammapada* (“Path of Virtue”), one of the Canonical books of the Buddhists, translated from the Pali by F. Max Müller, who says in his Introduction: “I cannot see any reason why we should not treat the verses of the *Dhammapada*, if not as the utterances of Buddha, at least what were believed by the members of the Council under Asoka 242 B.C. to be the utterances of the founder of their religion.”

² *Ibid.* p. 36.

³ *Ibid.* p. 5.

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 31.

⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 31–32.

⁶ *Ibid.* p. 62.

⁷ *Ibid.* p. 92.

⁸ *Laws of Manu*, *S. B. E.* xxv. 216, 230–231, 238.

⁹ *Ibid.* p. 207.

even the New Testament than between these two extracts from the sacred Scriptures. What Buddhism added to Brahmanism was not a fresh doctrine, but a new method. Brahmanism knows neither the cenobitic nor the missionary life. Its ascetics are hermits, and it has no preachers. It was remarked by one¹ who sympathised with what was best in both forms of the religious life that there is hardly a greater contrast than that between the lives of the hermit and the monk. A monastery repeats in substance some of the duties and claims of a home; and the fact that the ideal Buddhist was the member of a fraternity lifted him into a realm remote from the purely negative ideal of Brahminic holiness. The very fact that Gautama discarded the aim of self-torture left room for a positive ideal to spring up, impossible to a class of men absorbed in the practice of austerities. Buddhism must always be remembered as the first great missionary religion. A moral system found on the precept *Preach the Gospel*—cannot be wholly negative. The duty of conversion includes much besides. As we look on the map of Asia and consider the extent to which the Buddhists carried the message of their Master, as we think over the energy of various kinds needed to spread a propaganda from Ceylon to Manchuria and Japan, we must feel that the religion which achieved this expansion by the mere power of preaching, not only without the aid of the sword but without the permission to feel or rouse any hostility to other religions, embodies a principle of devotion to the supposed interests of others, which is positive in the highest sense of the word. Of this mingled tolerance and fervour there was nothing in the elder religion; there was a principle which opposed the possibility of such a combination. The spirit of caste makes missionary zeal impossible, and it is in this spirit we must seek the explanation of a hostility between the mother and the daughter faith which has made India at once the

¹ Frederick Denison Maurice.

holy land of Buddhism and a country almost devoid of Buddhists.

Difference
of caste, to
Brahman-
ism pro-
found, to
Buddhism
insignifi-
cant.

It is important to remember that what Buddhism opposed was the spirit of caste,¹ not the institution itself. Caste was recognised by Gautama as a principle of lay society, and lay society was no object of scorn to him. On the contrary, he gave it the sanction of an important ordinance; parental consent was necessary to the admittance of a new member to the holy order. The regulation was made at the request of his own father—made, it is true, after his brother had joined him without seeking that father's permission; but none the less it was a tribute to claims of which it seems to acknowledge a breach not to be repaired, but not to be repeated either. The order itself was quitted at pleasure; the monk or nun made no vows, and the permission to return to ordinary life was always available. Nevertheless Brahmanism rightly discerned in Buddhism the deadly foe of that spirit of distinction which as it incorporates so much of the worst with some of the best impulses of human nature, draws from the most widely remote sources of strength and covers a large surface of human endeavour. Not all Buddhists were monks, but all recognised and revered the monk, and the monk might be a member of the lowest caste. In that fact lay the emancipation from the fetters and destruction of the shelter of caste. The Sudra and the Kshatriya, brothers in the monastery, could not be inexorably separated elsewhere, and it is instructive to remember that the first great Buddhist monarch² belonged to the despised division of society. The coenobitic life gave India a class which, for those who belonged to it, swallowed up all the rest. "As the four rivers which fall into the Ganges lose their name as soon as they pour their waters into the holy stream,"³ says a Buddhist

¹ Caste, as an institution, says Mr. Rhys Davids, did not exist within the lifetime of Buddha, but the spirit was certainly there.

² Asoka, the Constantine of Buddhism, was the grandson of a low-caste adventurer.

³ Quoted in Koeppen, *Die Religion des Buddha*, p. 130.

writer, "so do the disciples of Buddha cease to be Brahmans, Kschatriyas, Vaisyas, and Sudras." Not necessarily in the sense that no one would thus regard them, but in the sense that such a fact ceased to have any significance in their own eyes. And whether a distinction be abolished, or cast into the background, is a matter of comparatively small importance from the view of Religion. Mankind is grouped by its aspirations, and no institution can long flourish under the shadow of a higher preference. It is as surely blighted by one who declares, in resonant tones, "This is better," as by one who should select it for vehement denunciation and lead his disciples to an inexorable attack.

The English reader is apt to suppose there is nothing to be said for caste. It is a great error.¹ We may be sure that whatever keeps its hold on the human heart from generation to generation appeals to something besides the self-centred instincts in humanity. The institutions which human beings cherish and defend have pushed their roots into a part of the being below the limits of selfishness. They could not obviously and irresistibly sway human desire if they had no connection with its vulgarest source; but they could not permanently affect it if this were all. Nothing surely can be more elevated than the conception of caste duties as set forth in the extracts given above from the code of Manu. The *warrior* is bound to respect weakness, to pity cowardice. The *Brahman* must bear a reproachful spirit with patience. The highest of all is the servant of all. The high castes are appointed to set forth the excellence of their special virtues; they are to be to all below them a luminous illustration of the meaning and beauty of goodness. But the right for one person is the wrong for another. Each one has his own vocation, not to be exchanged for another without loss to all. "Better

Yet caste
embodies
the ideal of
vocation

¹ "The rules of caste," says Sir M. Monier-Williams (*Modern India and the Indians*), "are not unimixed evil. On the contrary, they have done much good in India. Each caste has been a kind of police to itself."

one's own duty performed incompletely than the duty of another performed completely" ¹ is a sentence which occurs more than once in the sacred Indian code. There is a sense in which that is a truth for every one. Better that a mother should perform the duties of a parent very imperfectly than that she should allow a child to govern, even if the affairs of the nursery showed no trace of the error. Better a very poor piece of handiwork than an apelike facility in supplementing the hand by the foot. But the spirit of Brahmanism is analogous to one which would hinder the blind from reading through the fingers, or the deaf from hearing through the eyes. Side by side with the ennobling declaration that *noblesse oblige* it incorporated that value of privilege on the ground of its exclusiveness which belongs to the vulgarest part of humanity. "He who declares the law to a servile man, and instructs him in the mode of expiating sin, sinks with that very man into hell." ² Where could hatred breathe a deadlier spirit than in that declaration from the sacred Indian code? Here we see in ambush the fiercest spirit of persecution; here, long before the appearance of the Buddha, ³ we come in contact with denunciation of all that was holy and beneficent and potent in the preaching of Buddha. The Sudra who sets before himself the virtues of the Brahman commits deadly sin; he disturbs that human separateness which is a part of the holy Order of the Universe. The lowest class is born and must remain in a degraded condition; its members may not share in the common rites of the superior castes; the Brahman is even forbidden to accept their offerings. If a Brahman marry a Sudra "he sinks into the regions of torture"; ⁴ hell is the penalty for an unlawful condescension from the high to the low. "The self-existent created the Sudra merely for

¹ *Laws of Manu*, S. B. E. xxv. 423.

² *Ibid.* p. 141.

³ The date of the code is uncertain, but it is at any rate previous to that of Gautama.

⁴ *Ibid.* p. 78.

the sake of the Brahman; servitude is innate in him (the Sudra); who then can take it from him?"¹ His whole duty is comprised in obedience to the higher class. He has no concern with religion; the Brahman may take any of the Sudra's property if he need it for sacrifice, but must not accept it; if it be contributed to ritual observance, it must be involuntarily. The arrogance of the priestly caste is buttressed by a number of minute precepts, enjoining on men who live only to teach the meaning of holiness the mingled scorn of the Pharisee and the *Ancien Régime*. To realise the position of such a religion is to be prepared for the stored-up force accumulated for the protest against it.

The fact that we reckon four castes in ancient India is somewhat misleading for an understanding of the real virus of the caste system, because it disguises the fact that the difference belongs to the antagonism between hostile races. Practically the contrast is a memorial and survival of that between Aryan and non-Aryan, conqueror and conquered, and the chasm is between the three "twice-born" castes, as inheritors of the victors, and the Sudras, as representing the vanquished. It is not that there was no hostility between the other castes; between the Brahmans and Kshatriyas there was the deadly struggle repeated in mediæval Europe of priest and ruler. "Many a Barbarossa has there vanished," says a historian,² referring to these early wars. But the element of race hatred was absent from these struggles; vanquished and victors confronted each other on an equal plane. The Brahman in face of the Sudra was one with other castes. Unity, we shall always find, is most deeply opposed not to multiplicity but to dualism. In remembering the caste system of India we must think less of the divergence of Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaisya, and Sudra than of the antagonism between the twice-born and the once-born—the unconscious or half-conscious remembrance of

and
records
history.

¹ *Ibid.* p. 326.

² Albrecht Weber.

conquest on the one hand, and enslavement on the other, and the lack of that strong central influence which in the modern world obliterates both in a common national consciousness.

But is
opposed by
the spirit of
a Nation.

The evil tendencies of class separation in modern life confront an antagonistic influence lacking to India—lacking to the ancient world—the predominance of a Nation. The fact that we are all Englishmen makes the distinction of bourgeois and aristocrat, of bourgeois and artisan, something secondary and provisional. In the distinction of rank we see nothing which natural endowments may not traverse. Our aristocracy endures in virtue of that receptivity which Brahmanism abhors. We sometimes hear language which would imply that the change from caste feeling to national feeling merely substitutes one form of exclusiveness for another. It is a grave error. A Nation, no doubt, is a limited being; it is conceivably possible to make the love of England mean the hatred of France or Germany. But the self-consciousness of the Nation is naturally expansive, as the self-consciousness of the class is naturally exclusive. The love inspired by a national bond is the love of all whom we have, in ordinary life, any power to help or hurt. It turns all beneficent effort into the same channel with knowledge and power; it leaves outside of interest those only whom interest would rarely profit. It finds within its scope the greatest possible variety; it can permit itself to grow rigid in no single attitude; it must look down, it must look up; it must accustom itself to the level gaze of equal right, to reverence for authority, to pity for weakness, to indignation against crime. All these feelings must be enlisted in the service of patriotism, and we may surely conclude that the character in which they have found their fullest exercise must be ready for all new attachment, must have become responsive to every claim and sensitive to every appeal. The love of the Nation is the love of humanity in germ. But nothing of this holds good of the class. Here the limit

is the most conspicuous fact in the enclosure. While the love of the Nation is the love of the neighbour, the love of the class is often scorn and hate of the neighbour. The extracts given above exhibiting Brahman contempt for the Sudra show much besides the lack of national life, but they manifest a feeling which could not have endured for ages in any community where the Brahman and the Sudra had been conscious of a common centre. Our own day has brought out a curious illustration of the blank—the difficulty of speaking of the peoples of India by a single and appropriate name. Those who have taken an interest in the welfare of India have found their endeavours to promote some common life in its various inhabitants shackled by this trivial yet significant want. To speak of “an Indian,” it is justly remarked,¹ is to call up a wrong set of associations, nor is this less true of the alternative denomination of “a Hindu.” We have absolutely no name by which we can unequivocally and simply denote a native inhabitant of our most important dependency—an eloquent testimony to the Indian lack of that national life which would throw caste into the shade.

The spirit of Caste is a natural reaction from the spirit of Pantheism. It is an illustration of that law by which any truth neglected in one region is exaggerated in another. We know the tendency well; it is illustrated by all education. How often are the “saints of the earth” blamed for their parentage to sinners driven astray, it is surmised, by an ideal too high or too narrow for the necessities of youth! Of course, such reproaches are often just, but the result must sometimes occur where the reproach is undeserved. The more earnestly and consistently a father exhibits an ideal in

Indian
caste
affords an
example of
the law of
Reaction

¹ The Indian National Congress, says Mr. Theodore Morrison in his interesting little volume on *Imperial Rule in India*, 1899, has taken to calling the natives of India, Indians. Surely a very natural, and one would have thought inevitable nomenclature, and yet we feel the force of his appended remark (p. 9): “This is a term which I should be very loth to apply to the natives of India, because the usage of the English language has made the word Indian (when used as a substantive) synonymous with savage.” In the same way we are debarred from the word Hindu as being the title of a religion.

the eyes of his son, the more likely is he to prepare a revolution from it. Not from want of mutual love, but from the inevitable limitation of all human aims, and the certainty that one who has from infancy lived under the pressure of any special standard, will feel and exaggerate its limitations and inevitable mistakes. And the reaction seen in an individual lifetime as oscillation between successive generations appears in the life of a nation as a permanent and inexorable inconsistency. We have already noted this tendency in recording the special devotion of the passive race for a warrior god; we return to it as we observe the passionate recoil of the same race, on merely human ground, from that ideal of unity which on a wider realm they followed with equally passionate devotion. The religion which obliterated all distinction between God and man set up impassable barriers between man and man, and while it saw the Divine everywhere, acknowledged the truly human only within a rigidly enclosed section of humanity. The distinction between the "twice-born" and the ignoble multitude appealed to a people who hardly knew any other distinction. Order must perish, it was felt by those who recognised no One Supreme, if the limits of the high and low were confounded. The break up of caste obligation would "cause the universe to shake." Buddhism is thus a reaction against a reaction. It is the return of the primal Indian instinct to Unity after its concession to the instincts which seek separation; its wide diffusion is a tribute to the power that is created by the mere strength of protest against such instincts. In some form they exist everywhere, and a larger proportion of the globe than that dominated by any other religion testifies to the recoil which they produce, and thus to the union which they prepare, even while they most violently oppose it.

The Indian
Epics.

The moral life of a nation is most clearly revealed in its imaginative literature. So much has this been felt the case with India that one of its most painstaking historians has

almost filled his first volume with an analysis of its great Epics,¹ and the paragraphs which follow are a reproduction in brief of this analysis in the case of the most interesting one. If the attempt here made to convey the spirit of a great poem be in any degree successful, the reader will recognise that in the life of India the ascetic ideal is no mere counsel of perfection, but a moulding influence on those dreams which reveal taste and preference no less than aspiration. We feel this forcibly as we compare the two epics of India with the two epics of Greece. The Indian *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are both so vast, so multifarious, in regard to every possible material for narrative so omnivorous, that either Indian poem may be compared to either or both Greek poems. We shall find the study of one strain our limits, but before turning to the tale of Rama, we will glance at one episode in the other colossal poem, the only portion of any Indian poem which is at all familiar to English readers, that chapter of the *Mahabharata* which is known as the *Bhagavad Gita*, or, to give it its English equivalent, the Lord's Lay.²

In this striking mystic poem we have an elevated expression of fully-developed Hindu Pantheism interpolated in the account of a battle between two Indian tribes, the Kurus and Pandavas, whose actual conflict, it is believed, the whole poem commemorates. The hero is in his war chariot, ready to enter on a conflict in which the very existence of his family and kingdom is at stake, the

The Epic
of Pan-
theism

¹ Mr. Talboys Wheeler, *History of India*. The account which follows of the "Great War of Bharata," and the "Adventures of Rama," is taken altogether from the first two volumes of this History, a vivid and impressive account of these ancient epics, with such illustrative comments as would be possible only for one who has lived in India through many years. The author's assumption that by merely stripping away the supernatural trappings we recover the web of history is not one which would be made in the present day, but it gives a great vividness to his transcript, and if it cannot be accepted as accurate in point of fact, it will be felt by the sympathetic reader to bring him into a better position for understanding these Indian poems from an Indian point of view.

² Talboys Wheeler gives an illustrative extract, i. 294-296, well exemplifying the spirit of the whole.

magnitude of the issue being impressed on our minds by the ordinary Indian device of great numerical exaggeration. The din of battle is all around him, his command only is wanted to start the onset, when suddenly we find him listening to a prolonged theosophical dissertation, requiring hours of unbroken attention to take in. It is a striking exhibition of the remoteness of Indian thought from all considerations of time and place, and its readiness, at all times and in all places, to confront the problems of Eternity. This indifference towards the temporary disguises all chronological reference in the Epics. As the *Mahabharata* stands before the reader of to-day, retouched by successive generations, it gives us a compendium of the oscillating movement of Indian thought as it sways between the Buddhist ideal of a political Nirvana and that extreme opposite which the warrior caste exists to maintain. The lament of Arjuna, the Indian hero, might be put into the mouth of Gautama, if we imagine him ever forced to take part in a battle; the answer of his mysterious companion, seemingly a mere human helper, but revealed through his discourse as an incarnation of the Supreme Deity, gives us a view explaining alike the predominance and the defeat of a religion which seems here authoritatively denounced, and which yet animates every line. "I do not," says the Prince, "perceive any good likely to accrue after killing my kinsman in the battle. I do not wish for victory, O Krishna! nor sovereignty; what is sovereignty to us? Even those for whose sake we desire sovereignty are standing here for battle abandoning life and wealth. These I do not wish to kill though they kill me. They do not see the evils flowing from the extinction of a family, and the sin in treachery to friends; still should not we who do see the evils flowing from the extinction of a family, learn to refrain from that sin?" He deplores that blood should be shed on a doubtful issue, almost in the language of the late nineteenth century, yet with the very accent of Buddhism. "We do not know

whether it is better that we should vanquish them, or they us. If the sons of Dhritarashtra were to kill us in battle, that would be better for me." The aim of the poet to compromise between jarring ideals comes out strongly in the answer to this lament. "For a Kschatriya," Arjuna's mysterious companion urges (and we are reminded that the caste system must have been long in force), "there is nothing better than a righteous battle." "One should not abandon one's own duty though tainted with evil, for all duties are enveloped by evil as fire by smoke." "Looking on victory and defeat as equal, gird thyself for the battle." "Thy business is with action, not with the result of action." "Wretched are they whose motive is the result of action." The world of event is the world of illusion, yet it is also the world of duty. All the world is a stage and all the men and women merely players; but vast is the difference according as their part is played well or ill. The shrinking of a warrior from battle is regarded, by one who speaks from beyond the realm of appearances, at once with sympathy and with condemnation. The God speaks through his disguise to enforce the claims of the transient, vanishing world; its terrors, he reminds his hearers, are no less unreal than its delights. "He who deems himself the slayer, and he who deems himself the slain, are alike mistaken." The vision of the Eternal should bring emancipation from the tyranny of a dream, and set the struggling soul free for claims that are no less valid than fugitive. "I am the producer and the destroyer of the whole Universe; all hangs upon me, as pearls hang upon a string. I am the light of the sun and moon, brightness in the fire, sound in the ether, the vital principle in all beings, manliness in human beings, austerity in ascetics. I am the eternal seed of all things that exist, the discernment in the discerning and the glory in the glorious. It is I even who give strength to worship other divinities; what the worshipper seems to obtain from them is really

given by me." Such a declaration links the Pantheism of India with all worship addressed to One supporting humanity as an unconscious infant enfolded in the embrace it can neither solicit nor return. And at the same time it affords an explanation of the lack of any place for India in the world's history. The truth in these sentences is not a truth to be remembered by the leader of men in the crisis of action. To have it preached on the battlefield is to court defeat, or to render victory worthless, and this is exactly what the progress of the poem brings out. Arjuna does obey the Divine injunction, and performs prodigies of valour which end in victory; but it is a sullied victory, and the result justifies his reluctance to engage in battle far more than defeat would have done. We recall the lesson of the teacher, that all duties are entangled with evil. A sense of futility is over all. Our sympathies hesitate as in actual life; it is not as in the *Iliad* that we discern something noble on both sides. It is rather as in the most unsatisfactory part of experience, that we note confusion everywhere.

The Epic
of renun-
ciation.

The lesson is enforced even more emphatically by the Epic which may be called either the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey* of India, bearing, as it does, striking resemblances to both. As a more coherent production, the *Ramayana* is less remote from all poetry which interests the Western mind than is the *Mahabharata*, and the tribute of an eloquent French critic, M. Michelet,¹ has doubtless been to many readers, as to the present writer, a gateway opening on the palace of Indian imaginative thought. Any history embodied in its verse must be of later date than the *Mahabharata*, but here as elsewhere India shrinks from all definiteness of time relation, and we need merely remember that whatever the number of centuries which separate us from both poems, that which leaves its hero in a battlefield on the Ganges points towards an earlier state of things than

¹ Michelet, *Bible de l'Humanité*, 1854.

that which conducts him to Ceylon. The name of the heroine, Sita, is enough to give a clue for the translation of legend to history: it means the Furrow, and the complete Aryanising of the peninsula carries that civilisation of which the plough is the symbol to the southernmost point of Indian soil. But we will not allow the Indian Penelope to evaporate into a symbol of agriculture. Even more than her Greek sister she is a loving, suffering woman, and although the beautiful story of Demeter and Persephone reminds us that agricultural symbolism seems to lend itself to this pathetic elaboration, it shall not disguise the fair form of a heroine whose story, in all essential particulars, might be that of a modern romance. India idealises the virtues of woman, as Greece and Rome those of man, and the very associations of the word *virtue* are enough to remind us how much nearer in this respect is India to Teutonic Europe than to Rome and Greece. While we pause for a moment therefore to note the symbolism which connects the faithful wife with the fruitful field, we will not remember it for more than a moment. Sita deserves association with Andromache, with Alcestis, with Penelope, nay, with Desdemona and Cordelia. She should remain far more than any other figure in literature a type of conjugal fidelity, of womanly purity, and in tracing her story as a picture of the moral ideal of India, we will not regard her from any other point of view.

It is Sita who forms the moral centre of interest in this great poem, but as a picture of Indian life it is rightly named from her spouse, the prince Rama. The later editors and interpolators have converted him to a god, a transformation not without interest to Christian readers, or instruction as to the course of Indian thought, but surely foreign to the original epic, and possible to discard when we endeavour to simplify the poem. "Rama and Sita,"¹ says the modern

The saintly
hero.

¹ *The Great Epics of Ancient India*. Condensed into English verse by Romesh C. Dutt, C.I.E., 1900. With introduction by F. Max Müller.

Indian who has placed their story before the English reader in graceful and readable verse, "are the Hindu ideals of a perfect man and a perfect woman ; their truth under trials and temptations, their endurance under privations, and their devotion to duty under all the vicissitudes of fortune, form the Hindu ideal of a perfect life. In this respect," Mr. Dutt continues, "the *Ramayana* gives us a true picture of Hindu faith and righteous life, as Dante's *Divine Comedy* gives us a picture of the faith and belief of the Middle Ages of Europe." It is instructive as a clue to the ideal of India to discover that its type of perfect womanhood may be accepted by the highest standard of the West, while the man rouses our indignation or irritation as often as our admiration. It is an ideal of endurance, and as applied to the man becomes an ideal of asceticism. He chooses, she shares the life of renunciation. We will follow a story so illustrative of that moral aim we have sought to trace in the religious development of ancient India.

The Indian
nearer to
the modern
than to the
classic
standard.

Yet in some respects the standard is strikingly modern. The reader who, discarding all literary and poetic grounds of comparison, sets Agamemnon, Achilles, or Ulysses side by side with Dasaratha, father of Rama, and monarch of Oudh, will find himself contrasting a barbaric with what we have come to call a humanitarian standard. Under Dasaratha's beneficent rule—

"Peaceful lived the righteous people, rich in wealth, in merit high,
Envy dwelt not in their bosoms, and their accents shaped no lie.
Neighbours lived in mutual kindness helpful with their ample wealth,
None who begged the wasted refuse, none who lived by fraud
or stealth,
Cheat and braggart, and deceiver, lived not in the ancient town,
Proud despiser of the lowly wore not insults in their frown.
Poorer fed not on the richer, hireling friend upon the great,
None with low and lying accents did upon the proud man wait.
Men to plighted vows were faithful, faithful was each wedded wife,
Impure thought and wandering fancy stained not holy wedded life.
Thus was ruled the ancient city by her monarch true and bold,
As the earth was ruled by Manu in the misty days of old."

The monarch of this happy city, we are told, "took tribute from his subjects not for his own use, but to return it to them with greater beneficence, as the sun drinks up the salt ocean to return it in vivifying rain." An ideal far nearer that of modern humanity than anything Greek is. How unlike the view suggested in the *Iliad*! harsh contempt towards the lowly, cruel punishment meted out to protest wrung from the unwarlike by long suffering, the sensitiveness of mere selfish honour, the reckless disregard even of one's own side where personal interests are concerned. Ulysses, Agamemnon, Achilles, are not, it may be answered, set before us as patterns of moral conduct. No; it would of course be absurd to criticise them from that point of view when we are studying the *Iliad*. But it is not absurd to point out this difference when we compare the *Iliad* with a poem composed centuries earlier, yet embodying aspirations which could borrow nothing from the ideal of government in our own day.

At the time when a long period of childlessness is terminated by a solemn sacrifice through which he obtains an heir, Dasaratha is as complete an embodiment of prosperity as of virtue. The later apotheosis which lifts this Indian Isaac above the sphere of humanity is indeed expressive of the strong Indian tendency to confuse the divine and the human, but in disentangling the original legend Mr. Dutt has done a great service to the literary aspect of the poem. The incarnation idea greatly confuses the story of Rama, and makes the pretty picture of his childhood, which from our point of view is in any case a little trivial, grotesquely absurd. The details of his infancy incline us to forget even his heroic character; we could often fancy as we read that we are perusing some fond mother's account of a quite ordinary child. The Indian poet reckoned on an interest in details which soon weary a Western hearer; but his confidence is justified, we learn, even at the present day in his native country, where attentive

Influence
of Pan-
theism on
literary
expression.

crowds still gather round the reciter to learn how Rama would carry off a morsel of his father's dinner, and laugh at the monarch as he devoured it; how he cried for the moon, and would not be pacified by his mother's assurance that it was thousands of miles off, or by the jewels she brought him to play with instead, till the chief councillor thought of placing a mirror in the little hands and allowed the baby in this fashion to possess the moon. The story of Rama's childhood had already its audience, probably, when another picture of infancy was given to the world, by which its sympathies have been as deeply moved as those of the Indian race by the Indian tale; and the picture of Hector and Astyanax, set beside that of Dasaratha and Rama, reveal at once the character, unchanged through millenniums, of the deepest springs of human interest, and also the contrasted power of their representation according as the pen selects from or merely transcribes the tale of childhood. The equal attention given to the great and small, the garrulous expansiveness over every detail, afford us a striking exhibition of habits of thought and feeling connected with that wide-reaching spirit known as Pantheism. The influence is indirect, the attention which discovers it may appear fanciful. But the association of ultimate convictions with superficial tastes is as certain as that between the soil into which a plant casts its roots and the foliage it lifts to the sunshine. We see in this Indian fairy tale the influence of a creed that makes everything divine, and its antagonism to the selective spirit of literature.

Rama the
Ascetic

The modern reader, passing with some impatience over Rama's childhood and the raptures of his betrothal, hurries on to the crisis of his fate, his appointment as a Yuvarajah, *i.e.* as a sort of regent in the place of his aged father, who sighs for repose. The virtues of Rama have won the affections of his future subjects as completely as those of his bride, and their prospect of passing under his dominion is hailed with

a rapturous and unanimous delight, which remains on the memory as the only real joy of the long poem. After that we have only pictures of sadness, misery, gloom, or bitter disappointment, the pessimism deepening towards its close. There never can have been a harem in which pessimistic ideas might not find an illustration. The distracting influences which turn a brother to a rival, and set the parental against the conjugal affections, are brought home to every reader of the Book of Genesis, and rouse the thought—How many a Hagar must have found no angel in the desert, how many a Joseph, no patron on a throne! The Book of Kings affords an even closer parallel to the story of Rama; the deathbed of David furnishes an instructive illustration to the abdication of Dasaratha. The monarch who plays the part of the aged David in the Indian drama equals (it is surely impossible to exceed) his weakness; the intrigues of a favourite wife exhibit a far worse Bathsheba, while the representative of the youthful Solomon is the only person of the drama who brings the reader a sense of relief. The device—if indeed we can call angry tears and seclusion a device—by which the spiteful and jealous stepmother wrings from her doting husband a promise of absolute concession to any demand, and then demands that Rama, instead of being enthroned, should be banished to the jungle, proves indeed successful, but it is in spite of the indignant protest of her own son. The person who insists upon the promise being kept is the martyr himself. We must not ask why of two inconsistent promises, that made to a spiteful woman should take precedence of that made to a loyal people; we must remember only that the wilderness summons its hermit. The lack of *vraisemblance* which deadens dramatic interest brings out moral significance. It would have offended a modern sense of coherence much less if Rama had been sent into the wilderness without any reason but his own inward call; and if we would render the story of Rama intelligible, we must

read into it the history of Gautama. The comparison clearly exhibits the loss inflicted on a mythic narrative by anything that may be called an attempt to rationalise it. The history of Buddha expresses the Indian ascetic ideal without any framework of rational pretext, and we are satisfied. The legend of Rama interpolates a clumsy explanation, and we are revolted. The prince, who quitted the throne for the wilderness, and founded the religion of millions, could not, we feel, do otherwise. A predecessor who did the like because a spiteful stepmother had wheedled his father into a keenly repented promise, offends our sense of proportion and of duty. Rama has been hailed by a grateful people as one who is "afflicted at our distresses, rejoicing in our joys, upholding the law by protecting the innocent and destroying the criminal." The sudden deposition of such a monarch plunges them into despair; the Maharajah repents of the promise, entreats his son to remain, and on his refusal is stricken with a grief which shortly ends his life; while the brother in whose favour the change has been made hears of it with horror and anguish, and is only withheld from killing his mother by the dread of Rama's displeasure. A ruler thus needed and welcomed would have been bound to resist opposition, had there been any serious opposition to resist. One who avails himself of the first opportunity of abdication is in spirit rather a monk than a king. The slightest opening is enough for him to escape to his true home.

Prophecy
or reminis-
cence of
Buddha.

Throughout the story the resemblance to Gautama is traceable; most when the farewell glance of the departing saint to his sleeping spouse is expanded into an earnest but futile endeavour on the part of Rama to dissuade Sita from sharing his exile. As he lays aside his splendid robes, puts on the raiment of bark which forms the garb of a hermit, equips himself with the spade with which to dig for roots, and goes forth to the life of the wilderness, "his dignity not lessened any more than the waters of the ocean

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when a pot is filled from it," he paints in vivid colours the horrors of the life to which he is turning. "O Sita, you are the beloved daughter of a Rajah: how can you brave the dangers of the wilderness? your feet are as delicate as the petals of a lily, and the pebbles and the briars will afflict you grievously: you are like butter which will be melted by the sun at noonday. The roaring of the lions is terrible to hear: the roads are infested with wild elephants and the jungle with venomous snakes, so terrible that their breath alone will kill a man: sometimes you will have to subsist upon grass seed, sometimes upon bitter roots, sometimes you will have nothing: you will thirst when there is no water, and hunger when there is no food: your garments will be bark and skins, your bed will be grass or the bare earth: reptiles, mosquitoes, flies, scorpions will bite and sting you: you are dearer to me than my own life, and I cannot consent to your suffering pain on my account." He is overcome by her entreaties and ultimately does consent, but we are made to feel that the permission is but a doubling of the sacrifice; he takes with him a dearer self to endure the terrors and horrors he describes. The incidents of the jungle recall the *Iliad*, Sita being carried off by a demon king to Ceylon and rescued by her spouse after a fierce and successful war; but the associations of character are with the other epic, for Sita must be remembered with Penelope rather than with Helen. She is the ideally faithful wife, and her fate is as much more tragic than that of Helen as its narration is less artistic. In the clutches of Ravana as he flies through the air her fearless invective paints the worthy wife of a hero no less than the unreal character of Ravana's cruelty. "You pride yourself upon being a mighty hero," she tells him, "but you have acted like a mean coward; a hero never takes that which is another's save by conquest. Rest assured that wherever you go you must fall by the hand of Rama." Such defiance followed by entire immunity paints a weak or



magnanimous foe, and we find in Ravana something of both. Of all the conceptions of Satan evolved by poetic genius, he is the least impressive. Like Caliban, whom in many respects he resembles, he evidently represents the original inhabitants of the island; he is a savage below the true level of humanity, not in any sense a fiend. But although the epic is spoilt, as a work of art, by the introduction of a grotesque instead of an awful being, it gains meaning as a national expression. Evil, for the Indian mind, is a shadow, a confusion, a mistake; it can have no mighty and impressive embodiment.

Rama to  
the last a  
monk in  
spirit.

This indistinctness and transiency in the idea of Evil is brought vividly home to the reader by the account of the death of Ravana at the hands of Rama. The two fight for seven days and nights, and the importance of the victory is celebrated by celestial music among the gods, "who praise Rama as Vishnu, in that he has slain that evil Ravana who would otherwise have caused their destruction." We must take their word for it, but the danger is not brought home to us in any other way; we feel simply that a noxious beast has been got rid of. Still less is it possible to enter into the curious inversion of sympathy which here, as also in the *Mahabharata*, seems to follow defeat. We are impatient for the reunion of the divided pair; we learn with surprise that they must wait till the days of mourning for Ravana are ended; we feel this sentimental deference for a slain enemy like some bewildering interpolation, though in truth it harmonises with much else in the spirit of vague indiscriminating sympathy which belongs to Pantheism. But when at last, after this needless delay, Rama desires that the wife who has gone through so much for him shall be brought into his presence from the garden where she has been secluded, our anticipations meet a much ruder shock. The story is best given in a prose version of the narrative. "When all was ready a litter was brought to the garden" (which had been Sita's only prison),

“and she took leave of the other women, and was carried to the plain outside the city. When she entered the presence of Rama—” How high those words raise the reader’s anticipations! The wife who has preferred the jungle with her spouse to a palace without him, who has faced torture and death rather than be untrue to him, is once more in his presence—we anticipate the rapture of a union which shall make the two more than ever one. On such anticipations the greeting of Rama falls like an avalanche. “I have killed all my enemies and have delivered you from captivity, but now that I have removed my shame I care not to behold you; I can never again receive you as my wife, for you have lived in the house of Ravana.” She had been carried there in spite of desperate resistance, her sojourn had been a martyrdom; the fantastic and unreal standard of female purity or rather etiquette which demands her repudiation on this score is one for which it is impossible to make room in one’s imagination by any literary device whatever. We feel again that the avowed reason is utterly inadequate to the result. It is the Indian idea of renunciation which again emerges and demands that the hero shall repudiate the blessed union now within his reach, as he has renounced his kingdom for a mere fantastic scruple. It is again the aim at sacrifice, at endurance, at surrender, which comes forward when all the obvious difficulties of life are ended, and enforces from within new modes of endurance, when those which belonged to outward circumstances are swept away. Sita protests indeed with the natural accents of indignant and suffering innocence against the cruelty of her repudiation, and appeals to the ordeal of fire by which her purity is triumphantly established: and here the original legend ends. But we will follow the variant sanctioned by centuries of narration, and by the transcript of a historian of India. After the return of the now royal pair to Oude and their re-establishment on the throne, Rama’s adherence to his faithful wife proves too

weak to overcome the opprobrium of slander; he acknowledges his wife's innocence and purity, but declares himself "unable to endure the taunts of the people," and against the entreaties of his brothers, Sita, then about to give birth to her first-born, is sent into the jungle, and left to the pangs of child-birth under the midday sun on a sandy plain. The trials and privations which he once so eloquently described when endeavouring to shield her from them, he now inflicts upon her. "Her feet, tender as the newly-blown rose, were torn with blisters; her throat was parched with thirst; no tree was at hand to shelter her from the heat of the sun. Sometimes she walked a little way, and sometimes she fell to the ground; she had no friend near her to whom she could tell her sorrows, or from whom she could receive consolation." But here again, as in her first trial, friends arise up to her from the animal world. "The wild beasts who surrounded her on all sides were her only guards. The birds descended from the sky to afford her shelter with their wings, while others dipped their pinions into the water of the Ganges and fanned her with them." Under this care and that of a hermit she becomes the mother of twin sons, brought up by the hermit, and ultimately recognised as his sons by Rama, after they had visited his court as wandering minstrels. Sita's restoration follows, and Rama implores

"Pardon, if the voice of rumour drove me to a deed of shame,  
Bowling to my people's wishes I disowned my sinless dame."

Even this poor apology, with its despicable excuse, is welcome to the reader, but still more is the appeal by which Sita, in a passage of which the conclusion recalls the passing of Œdipus, implores the Goddess of Earth to spare her the ignominy of restoration—

"If unstained in thought and action I have lived from day of birth,  
Spare a daughter's shame and anguish, and receive her, Mother  
Earth !

If in truth unto my husband I have proved a faithful wife,  
Mother Earth, relieve thy Sita from the burden of this life." <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Dutt, *Great Epics of India*, pp. 177-178.

Her prayer is answered, the earth opens, and Sita is borne away in the embrace of the Goddess. Two Rajput tribes still boast of their descent from the two sons of the Indian Penelope.

The history of Sita idealises the spirit of India. Her last prayer is for a deliverance from the burden of life. The resemblance in the passing of Sita to the passing of Œdipus is explained by the fact that transcendent genius is universal rather than by any real approach between the spirit of India and the spirit of Greece. The spirit of Greek poetry catches gleams from every land and enshrines some seeming record of affinity with all other genius. The woe-worn spirit of the aged king condemned to vast calamity for sins not his own responds to a summons which no other hero of Hellenic blood is prepared to welcome; while the Indian queen, in like circumstances, only echoes the aspirations most characteristic of her race. Sita embodies that sense of futility, of vast disappointment, of wasted effort and unrequited devotion, which is probably not absent from the experience of human beings in any land and of any blood, but which animates no great literature but that of India. It is the home of renunciation, the teacher of that power of a vacuum which in the moral as in the material world provides some of the strongest forces known to humanity.

Sita to the  
last a  
victim.

## CHAPTER III

### PERSIA, AND THE RELIGION OF CONFLICT

The primal  
antagon-  
ism of  
Monism  
and  
Dualism

No deeper cleft divides human spirits than that which separates the faith possible to men for whom Evil means a mere negation, a mere shadow, a form of ignorance, from that which regards it as a real antagonist to every form of good. If a clearer light hereafter is to show each of these convictions alone as the half of a truth too large for our minds, at their present stage, to take in, it remains true here and now that almost all other antitheses which divide human spirits either involve or spring from this contrast. The difference culminates in what men call religion, but it influences the whole of life. So far as men are capable of logical thought, so far as their ideas are combined in any coherent whole (and these qualifications cover many apparent exceptions), those who diverge here will be found to arrive at different conclusions on almost all the important questions which can exercise the mind of man. Their logical and obvious disagreement does not measure their actual opposition; on each side separate assumptions will colour common beliefs; the two parties will mean different things by the same words, draw different conclusions from premises apparently the same, and discover unconquerable divergence where they seem to seek a common goal.

repre-  
sented by  
India and  
Persia.

In various forms, and disguises often hard to penetrate, this issue divides the world. As it is the deepest by which human spirits are kept apart it is apparently also the oldest. We have seen in the faith of India a manifestation of the spirit which discovers, beneath the multiplicity of Nature,



a vast Unity: we turn now to one representing, for all time, that which recognises in its place a profound Dualism. While India saw everywhere the unfolding of a single principle, and recognised no other antagonism throughout existence than that implied in the distinction between what seems and what is; for Persia every step was taken to the right or left of the watershed of Good and Evil. In her sacred Scriptures and her legendary history we see in its fullest illustration that kind of character which springs from and again results in the ideal of Conscience, the constant appeal of Duty with its shadow of sin, the sharp and all-pervading antithesis of Right and Wrong. In its actual history we can find this only so far as we may reckon detestable wickedness and paralysing corruption as a tribute to the influence of a moral standard that is defied, and measure the height by the fall. But all Persian thought illustrates the meaning of Dualism, the ideal of Conflict. The antithesis of Good and Evil, for it, runs through all creation, so that the evil world represents no mere mutiny against the good, but a hostile power, confronting it from without: it ceases to be the expression of human failure, it becomes an expression of all against which human effort is directed. "If the slayer think he slays, if the slain think that he is slain, they are both of them mistaken," is the verdict of Indian wisdom on the conflict of life; but Persian wisdom sees strife as the great reality of all experience. For India, all that truly exists is Good; Evil is a dream, a delusion. For Persia, Evil is as real as Good;<sup>1</sup> their conflict begins before the creation and ends only with the history of the world. Hence on the one side the aim is acquiescence in

<sup>1</sup> "Le védisme connaît des forces mauvaises, il ne connaît pas des forces méchantes . . . Le mazdéisme a précisé, son démon fait le mal pour le mal"—*Ormuzd et Ahriman, leur Origine et leur Histoire*, par James Darmesteter, p. 9, 1877, a work which was the source of my interest in its subject, and is the authority for much that follows. The early death of this brilliant scholar has deprived Oriental study of a disciple whose influence is manifested in the evident reluctance of his contemporaries to express dissent even from those of his views which they reject decidedly.

all that is; on the other, resistance to some of the strongest influences known to man. The object of yearning and hope for the Indian is the life of repose; all moral aspirations turn towards quiescence of will, and the giving up of that which marks individual personality. The Persian blessedness is found in the life of strenuous activity, of resolute exertion; every faculty is to be kept at its highest point; all that opposes itself to energetic life is regarded as a spiritual foe.

Concen-  
tration of  
idea of  
Evil.

In these contrasted ideals, as in much besides, it may be said that India is on the same side as Science. As a fact we know that darkness—the natural type of Evil—is merely the absence of light. But imagination and feeling are here the foes of Science. They suggest a principle of darkness more forcibly than they suggest a principle of light. We do not see the light, we see by it, but the darkness hides, and to hide seems a more positive action than to let appear. The daylight reveals the various colouring of outward objects, but has no distinct hue of its own, while the blackness of night is an object of perception. The child awakening in terror seems actually to see the darkness. The growing night appears a more definite invader than the growing day; darkness imprisons, light restores the prisoner to the open world; we are alone with darkness while light leaves us amid the surrounding scenery, and in ordinary conditions calls no notice to itself. How much in the inward world echoes this symbolism! Pain is the most definite sensation there is; ease, to one who has not known pain, is no sensation at all. The healthy know not of their health, only the sick of their sickness; and for the moment Evil always seems more real than Good. To the scientific mind the nature of light is a profound warning against that seeming; here light is the reality, darkness the mere negation. But imagination has its own influence in the beliefs of early mankind; it seems, on the side of Evil, to have been a growing influence. The Indo-Iranian race in the highlands of Asia worshipped a Divinity

of the clear sky, and while his opponents were recognised as actual beings they were a confused crowd rather than a hostile army; the demon of darkness was a mere rebel, a mutinous invader, predestined to defeat. With separation of its two elements arose a fundamental divergence of creed and character. For India the demon army receded and grew dim; for Iran<sup>1</sup> it became concentrated in the person of a mighty chief, encamped within the view of his rival, and during the whole duration of earthly existence an active and dangerous enemy to the God of Light. We seem, in these words, to describe mediæval Christianity no less than Zoroastrianism, and the reader who remembers *Paradise Lost* has a ready clue to the spirit of the Persian creed. The Satan whom most people think they find in the Bible, but whose picture is really drawn by Milton, gives the English reader a wonderfully close approach to the Ahriman, of whom, perhaps, he is in some sense a descendant.<sup>2</sup>

Ahriman is not a mere development of any member of the Indian demon world as Ormazd is of the Indian divine world. He is a new discovery of the mythologic imagination. Ormazd, or Ahura-Mazda—the Great Ahura or Asura—is Varuna transferred to the Persian Heaven, the God of Light, of Order, more deeply moralised, more significantly righteous, but not embodying any new moral idea. Varuna is indeed rather a Vedic than an Indian god;<sup>3</sup> his character in later Indian religion is changed, and his significance lost. The evolution of Indian thought was divergent

Rise of the  
great An-  
tagonist

<sup>1</sup> Iran is the native name for Persia with a wider significance, and (at all events as used here) an implied contrast with Turan, the generic name of the barbarous Turanian races. The contrast becomes almost an earthly reflex of that between Ormazd and Ahriman.

<sup>2</sup> The idea is suggested to any reader of the *Bundahis*, a book of uncertain date, which we may remember as at once the Genesis and Apocalypse of the Persian Bible, although being of much later date it is not included in the Avesta proper (Volume v. in the precious collection of *Sacred Books of the East*).

<sup>3</sup> A Vedic scholar, Hermann Oldenberg, thinks it hardly too much to say (*Die Religion des Veda*, 1894, p. 32, note) that the Vedic Varuna stands nearer to Ormazd than to the Varuna of a later date.

from that idea of righteousness which the early hymns to some extent recognise in him. The evolution of Persian thought was altogether convergent with it; so that we may recognise the God of Righteousness, on Persian soil, as the heir and representative of the God of Order in the Aryan Punjab. His antagonist, on the other hand, has no Indian representative. Ahriman is a mythic shadow of Ormazd.<sup>1</sup> He is the offspring of the logical spirit wedded to the sense of religion, a product of the same character as the dark underworld below the earth invented to balance the bright sky above it. The abyss of light is a reality, the abyss of darkness is an inference. Such is the relation of the Iranian Ahriman to the Aryan "great Ahura" who was transformed from a God of Order to a God of Righteousness by the neighbourhood of an almost equivalent antagonist. Note that it is not the Indian God of Battle who becomes the representative of a holy war. The hymns to Indra bring before us no mighty rival, sharing his distinction and defining his energy. Ormazd is not a fighter, but a resolute and unchanging opponent. He awaits victory, but organises a long war, we may say a crusade. Most heroes of legendary lore triumph over some incarnation of malignant power, or some guardian of hidden wealth, but when we turn to the Persian faith we find these desultory and episodic skirmishes transformed to a prolonged and almost equal conflict, a war between mighty rivals, a war which fills and even transcends the earthly history of humanity. For the creation of the material universe is itself a result of the discovery, by the Evil Being, of his antagonist and future conqueror; it is erected by Ormazd as a bastion between the worlds of good and evil, of light and darkness—a profound and pregnant idea to which we shall have occasion to return. And all that is called

<sup>1</sup> "Tout-ce que créera Ormazd deviendra la mire de son effort (i.e. that of Ahriman), sa méchanceté est organisée par la bonté d'Ormazd,"—*Ormazd et Ahriman* (Darmesteter, former quotation continued).



into existence by Ormazd becomes the object of an inverted imitation on the part of his opponent, so that we must think of good and evil as opposed symmetrically throughout all existence.

Hence we may discern, in the most characteristic expressions of Persian belief, a reverence for all the active and strenuous virtues of man in striking contrast not only with the passivity of India but also with a large part of the religion of the world, for it is the opponent of all asceticism. "We worship Strength and Prosperity and Might and Victory and Glory and Vigour."<sup>1</sup> Most people worship these things in some sense, but we could hardly match this naive avowal of the Zendavesta from the sacred scriptures of any other nation. It is at the opposite pole of the moral sphere to the ideal of the Buddhist monk; it inverts the aims which culminated in Nirvana. It is the foe of the spirit of the cloister in all places and at all times; in modern dialect its watchword is "religion in common life"—religion for the soldier, the merchant, the manufacturer, the lawyer, the farmer: the religion which claims adherence from every worker by hand or brain. An episode given by Herodotus from the struggle of Persia with Greece, compared with one already touched on in a great war in India, brings out the contrasted ideals, showing us on the one hand a warrior who on the battlefield avows his dread of success, and on the other one who weeps to discover its impossibility. When the invading Persian army gathered up its shattered strength for its last struggle at Plataea after the departure of Xerxes, a banquet given by

Moral  
influence of  
the idea of  
Antagon-  
ism.

<sup>1</sup> Zendavesta, translated by James Darmesteter, *Sacred Books of the East*, vol. xxiii. p. 30. This Iranian Bible, which should properly be referred to as the Avesta, fills three volumes of the *Sacred Books of the East*, viz., iv., xxiii., xxxi. The Bundahis, its necessary complement, is vol. v. The reader is requested to remember that the extracts given here, though never changing the words of the text (and of course adding none), do not necessarily retain them all, where condensation seems to clear the meaning, and that for the same reason these extracts are not always entirely continuous even when they contain no marks of omission.



the friendly Thebans brought Greek and Persian side by side, and left on the page of the historian an expressive utterance of this yearning after achievement. "See'st thou this host?" asks the Persian noble, addressing his Greek neighbour. "All shortly shall perish, and leave but a few survivors from the vast multitude." "Surely," urges his neighbour, "thou shouldst communicate this knowledge to the general of the army." "My friend," answers the Persian, with a flood of tears, "the effort were in vain. This is the curse of life, with abundant knowledge to accomplish nothing."<sup>1</sup> Arjuna, it will be remembered, felt in similar circumstances that the curse of life was to accomplish much. The defeat which would have been hailed by the Indian as relieving him from a burden of responsibility was an occasion for the Persian of lament on the futility—not merely the disaster—of human experience. In that lament we discern clearly the aim of the *historic* nation; we feel ourselves among the people whose rise marks the start of the narrative of civilised human life, as a single sequence of connected events. When we turn from India to Persia we have crossed the barrier that separates the men who breathe philosophy from the men who make history. On that side no chronology, no definiteness, no narrative. On this everything is definite, everything is expressed in terms of time and space, of event and circumstance. There the ideal is resignation, silence, repose; here it is courage, speech, unremitting energy. The two ideals divide the moral sphere between them; every conceivable object of admiration groups itself round one or the other pole.

The  
religion of  
Energy

The ideal for Man, in Persia as elsewhere, must be the ideal of God. Ormazd, like the Hebrew Jehovah, is a Creator; he is proclaimed as such on rock-hewn inscriptions

<sup>1</sup> ἐχθίστη δὲ ὁδύνη ἐστὶ τῶν ἐν ἀνθρώποισι αὐτῇ, πολλὰ φρονέοντα μηδενὸς κρατέειν (Herodotus, ix. 16). The way in which Herodotus mentions the name of his informant, and the fact that the latter was said to have told others what he told the historian, surely justify us in believing that we have here a genuine Persian utterance.

not less emphatically than on the sacred page. "Ormazd is a mighty God," says Darius on the rocks of Persepolis; "he has made this Earth, that Heaven; he has made Man; he has made the satisfaction of Man"<sup>1</sup>—a declaration vividly illustrated by the text of the Avesta, where Ormazd invites his prophet to "Demand of me, who am the Maker."<sup>2</sup> If God is the Maker, so must Man be. And thus, while India presents the religion of Resignation, Persia presents the religion of Will—the religion which seeks everywhere to impress personality on the world of things, and sees the Universe of Being as a field for the exercise of choice. A spirit of keen activity penetrates the whole world of duty; every faculty is to be kept at the highest point; all that opposes itself to energetic life is seen as a spiritual foe; thus even protracted sleep is the work of the female demon Bushyasta with her "long hands" holding men back from vigorous exertion.<sup>3</sup> All that is not good is an enemy of good. Death is to the righteous the entrance into eternal joy, yet Death itself is to this vivid, life-loving religion an object of horror. The double feeling thus aroused is brought out in the account of the pilgrimage of the faithful soul<sup>4</sup> who has "come from the material world to the world of the spirit, from the decaying world into the undecaying." Even in those raptures there is a tone of solemnity, of awe, in the reference to Death. "How didst thou depart this life, thou holy man?" he is asked by one who is gone before, with a pathetic glance backward to the homely pleasures of Earth. "How didst thou come from the abodes full of cattle, and full of wishes and enjoyments of love?" And Ormazd interposes to keep that reminiscence unspoken.

<sup>1</sup> The inscription is given by Professor Browne (*A Literary History of Persia*, 1902, pp. 93, 94). The passage in the text was taken from Abel Hovelacque, *Avesta, Zoroastre et le Mazdéisme* (1880), p. 171.

<sup>2</sup> *S. B. E.* iv. 204, 206.

<sup>3</sup> Bushyasta is the demon who prompts Dr. Watts's excuse to the sluggard. "Sleep," she says, "oh, poor man; the time" (for waking) "has not yet come" (*Ibid.* p. 197).

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* xxiii. 314-318.

“Ask him not—him who hast just gone the dreary way, full of fear and distress, where the soul and the body separate.” It is the way on which man tastes more bliss than all that is enjoyed in the life that is ended: but there is a horror in the thought that it is the way of Death. The body is no burden which it is a release to lay down. There is a solemn shudder in the thought of that divorce even in the blessedness of Heaven.

Reverence  
for In-  
dustry.

Among ancient peoples, if we except Egypt, we could not set another beside Iran in respect for work. The baleful shadow of slavery lay across every kind of industry for the classical races; as did that cast by the aspiration after Nirvana for the races of India. The Greek on the one hand, the Indian on the other, alike despise all manual exertion. Hellenism marks it as the badge of slavery. Pantheism avoids it as an obstacle in the way of Holiness. By Iran, as by Egypt, it was regarded from what we may call a modern point of view. The worshippers of Ormazd were bound to the duties of the peasant as much as to those of the warrior. Far more, indeed, of their scriptures are directed towards the duties of patient inglorious toil than towards the equipment of the hero. ‘Thrift is enjoined as the reverence due to industry. “Ahura Mazda,” the pious Persian confesses, “does not allow us to waste anything of labour that we may have, not even so much thread as a maid lets fall in spinning.”<sup>1</sup> The reverence for toil is not confined to their sacred scriptures; it appears in a kind of literature where we least expect to find it. In the great Persian epic<sup>2</sup> no figure of prince or noble is more heroic than that of the blacksmith Gaveh, whose leathern apron, set with gold and gems, increased by every successive Persian monarch, becomes the standard of Persia, and from whom the proudest are glad to claim descent. It is this son of lowly toil who resists the tyrant Zohak and sets the glorious

<sup>1</sup> *S. B. E.* iv. 66.

<sup>2</sup> The *Shah Nama*, i.e. Book of Kings.

Feridun upon the throne. Zohak has permitted the demon to kiss his shoulders, and from each kiss has sprung a serpent, to whose hunger the miserable people over whom he has usurped dominion are compelled to furnish a tribute; for these creatures feed only on human brains. The two sons of the blacksmith have been seized upon as their prey, but his fierce indignation compels their restitution and initiates a revolt, in which the demon usurper perishes, and a member of the lawful dynasty is placed upon the throne. The apron of toil has become the symbol of victory, and the sacredness of work is emblazoned in a national standard.

Agriculture is the typical example of industry for an early people; and seems naturally represented as a sort of espousal between the active powers of Man and the Earth yearning to bring forth her fruits. The Earth is to be to the husbandman as a loving bride. "Unhappy is the land that has long lain unsown, and wants a husbandman, as a fair maiden a husband."<sup>1</sup> And the evil powers seem to regard the efforts of the husbandman with a sort of adulterous jealousy. When wheat is coming up "it is as though hot iron were turned in the throats of the demons."<sup>2</sup> The place "where the Earth feels most happy" is the place whereon "one of the faithful erects a house, with a priest within, with cattle, with wife, child, and good herds; where the cattle thrive, where the dog thrives, the wife and child and every blessing of life; where one of the faithful cultivates much corn, grass, and fruit; where he waters ground that is too dry, or dries ground that is too wet."<sup>3</sup> The warrior had no more honour than "the thrifty tiller of the soil," an expression often recurring, and apparently designating the type of an honourable layman. In a moment of solemn worship we find a desire to approach (in thought we must suppose), "the farmhouse of the holy cattle-breeding man;"<sup>4</sup> and the sluggard is denounced with a sort of eighteenth century

The  
sacredness  
of Agriculture  
a preparation  
for  
Patriotism

<sup>1</sup> *S. B. E.* iv. 29.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 23.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 31.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* xxxi. 341.

sternness—"O man who doth not till the Earth of Zoroaster, ever shalt thou stand at the door of the stranger among those who beg for bread, and wait there for the refuse that is brought to thee."<sup>1</sup> The idea of agriculture as an espousal between Earth and Man readily passes into a love of country; sympathy with the soil creates reverence for the native land. In Persia we first come on the feeling of patriotism associated not as among other ancient races with the unity of a tribe or city, but with geographical outline, as in the modern world. "I have made every land dear to its people, even if it had no charms whatever in it," Ormazd is made to address Zoroaster.<sup>2</sup> The statement is inapplicable to the wandering races of the early world; its value lies in its description of the writer's own people and country. In the sacred writings "the house, the borough, the town, the country" are catalogued in numerous references as if in the modern spirit of territorial allotment. The idea of a Nation is one which we constantly approach, but as often feel it premature; what we confront is not a Nation but an Empire. Still the approach is made. The Fravashis, or spirits of the faithful departed, retain their love of their own land; it is their work to watch over it and guard it from the influences of drought and of foreign foes; they come flying to the sovereign who invokes them "as if they were well-winged birds."<sup>3</sup> Except in our Bible, no other ancient scripture celebrates a Pleasant Land. The feeling seems to linger in the country still. "This is Persia!" was the exclamation of Sir John Malcolm's guides when, on his mission to the court,<sup>4</sup> they reached a verdant valley in the mountains, fragrant with the odour of hyacinths and roses, and murmurous with the waters of cascades. The salt desert they had just crossed formed no less a part of the kingdom, but no region appeared worthy of the name of Iran but one that was

<sup>1</sup> *S. B. E.* iv. 30.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* iv. 3.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* xxiii. 196.

<sup>4</sup> In 1810. He left an entertaining as well as instructive account of the mission in his anonymous *Sketches of Persia*.



hallowed by the liberality of nature. The feeling is allied to a far more modern sense of patriotism than anything in Greece or Rome. Is there any connection between it and the fact of Persia being the only monarchy of our own time which is older than Christianity? The monarch and the nation are correlatives, and the fact that in the age of city life we have one people who approach national unity has surely some connection with the fact that their monarchy has a successor to-day who inherits his title and much of his dominions.

Industry is not the only unclassical virtue which takes a large part in the Persian ideal; truthfulness is here no less emphatic a claim than industry. It is not a duty inculcated by all religions. Perhaps we might say that veracity is not, in the same sense as kindness, a natural duty. So much as cleaves to the idea of personal devotion must be a part of any moral ideal, but this is as often the foe as the ally of veracity. "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour" might be so inculcated as to open the door to falsehood on the right hand and on the left; an interested hearer might extort from it the apparent permission to bear false witness either for a neighbour or against an enemy. So far as we know, the only ancient religion which guards against such a perversion is the Persian.<sup>1</sup> With the sense of a great spiritual conflict—a struggle against invisible enemies—deceit rises to an importance which it could never possess when contemplated as mere failure of accuracy. Falsehood is an act of treason against the Divine Being. From rock-hewn inscription and the page of sacred scripture alike its testimony is borne. Darius, says the Behistun inscription,<sup>2</sup> was favoured by Ormazd "because he was not a heretic, nor a tyrant, nor

The  
sacredness  
of Truth,  
both as  
sincerity

<sup>1</sup> The code of Manu sternly denounces false witness but allows of falsehood for a good object.

<sup>2</sup> A record of brilliant victories and horrible cruelties carved by Darius on the face of a lofty rock on the Zagros range. It was deciphered by Sir Henry Rawlinson, who believes it to date from the year 516 B.C.

a liar," and the same inscription devotes to utter perdition "the man who is a liar" under his successors. When we turn to the Avesta we find the command, "Break not the contract which thou hast entered into with one of the faithful or the unfaithful." Here our commandment is expanded; the Persian is forbidden to bear false witness against his enemy. The claim of truthfulness is impersonated in a deity whose office it is to watch over the dealings of man with man, and avenge all falsehood and treachery, with heretic and orthodox alike. Mithra, the god to whom this office is assigned, a representative of the revealing light, is at once the eldest of the gods and their latest survivor. His name occurs in the *Rig-veda* long before what we have been accustomed to call ancient history begins, and again some centuries after its conclusion the name emerges into prominence, and the mysteries of Mithra appear as a rival to the dawning faith of modern Europe.<sup>1</sup> He was the comrade of Varuna, the earliest god of the Aryan race; and when Paganism made its last stand against Christianity, he was the claimant for the worship finally attracted to Christ. There was a time in which a keen observer might have doubted whether the world was to be Mithraic or Christian. And no member of the Greek or Roman Pantheon could have appealed to the generations hungering after a new life with the moral force of the god in whom the Persian saw embodied the claim of Truth. He was an avenger of all betrayal, the guardian of open and fair dealing, the upholder of that in man which man can trust. "The ruffian who lies to Mithra," the Avesta tells us, "brings death upon the whole country." No strength or agility makes up for the withdrawal of the support of the God of Truth; no skill can give a true aim to the weapons of the deceiver." "The spear that the foe of Mithra flings darts backward . . .

<sup>1</sup> "Mithra, ce dieu puissant qui un instant disputa au Christ l'empire du monde" (Darmesteter, *Ormazd et Ahriman*, p. 21).

even though his spear be truly aimed it makes no wound." "Mithra upholds the columns of the lofty house, and makes its pillars solid; he sets the battle a-going, and stands against armies in battle. . . . Sad is the abode unprovided with children, where abide men who lie unto Mithra."<sup>1</sup> "All power of discernment, all the sight of the eyes, the hearing of the ears, is from him; he is the Revealer, the witness to all truth; he takes sight from the eyes, hearing from the ears of those who have misused their sight and hearing to the confusion of another. He watches with a discriminating care over graduated claim; Mithra"—or the contract—"is twenty-fold between friends, fifty-fold between husband and wife, a hundred-fold between father and son, a thousand-fold between nations."<sup>2</sup> It is striking to come upon a recognition of the duty of nation to nation, of which modern Europe has not yet succeeded in working out the practical application, in a writing of at least two thousand years ago.

The duty of truth is felt in a higher sense than that of sincerity. The adherent of this religion must not only say the thing he believes, but believe the thing that is true. The Indian thought of God is that He is to be described only by No, no. To the Persian, on the other hand, the word reveals as the light reveals; with the idea of a primordial conflict emerges the idea of loyalty to that revelation. If two mighty rivals are contesting the sovereignty of the universe the worshipper has to resist as well as to adore; to protest against illegitimate claim, against false belief. Doubt was familiar long before—we may discover traces of it in the *Rigveda*;<sup>3</sup> but here we

and as  
adherence  
to objective  
reality.

<sup>1</sup> *S. B. E.* xxiii. 120-129.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* xxiii. 149-150. "A fair recognition of the *jus gentium*," says Darmesteter.

<sup>3</sup> "Grant us faith" is a prayer (*Rigveda*, ix, 151), and the noun used here, *Craddhā*, seems identical with our *creed*. Who can tell us the true path to the Divine Beings? asks another seeker (200, 5). Some, we learn from the same source, had gone so far as to deny the existence of Indra, a species of Atheism which opens a long vista of doubt.

come upon the duty of denial. We find ourselves for the first time on the track of a "false religion." The Persian scriptures would be unintelligible without this conception. They imply a long controversial background; they exhibit that reverted gaze of belief upon itself which comes late in the history of a faith. "There are five sins," says the Persian scripture, "which make a man a Peshotanu" (*i.e.* a criminal liable to certain severe punishment); "the first is when a man teaches one of the faithful another faith, another law, and leads him astray."<sup>1</sup> And again: "O Maker of the material world, thou holy one, what is it that brings in the unseen power of death?" "It is," answers Ormazd, "the man who teaches a wrong religion."<sup>2</sup> It is not that they have confused the transient with the Eternal, the many with the One. It is that in a Holy War they have taken the wrong side.

Human  
history an  
episode in  
Divine  
history.

For the leader of the hosts of righteousness is not a mere god of battle. He is a God of Order; we may say in modern language a God of Progress. The visible universe, in the Indian view a mystic growth, the origin of which is lost in immeasurable remoteness, is in the Persian as definitely the work of an architect as St. Peter's at Rome. In this sense Creation is to Indian imagination inconceivable. The Highest, it may be, knows the mystery of the emergence of Cosmos from Chaos, "or perhaps even He knows it not."<sup>3</sup> The Persian Genesis, on the other hand, gives a record of Creation more definite than much modern history.<sup>4</sup> Earthly existence is comprised in a great year comprising twelve thousand ordinary years, of which it does not fill quite one half. The first season is one of pure spiritual existence; it is not clear how the three millenniums which compose it are dis-

<sup>1</sup> *S. B. E.* iv. 176. The elaborate ritualism of a large part of the Avesta may be taken as a pronouncement against heresy.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* iv. 195.

<sup>3</sup> See above, pp. 69, 70.

<sup>4</sup> The following account is taken chiefly from the Bundahis, *S. B. E.* v.



tinguished from the preceding eternity. The worlds of light and darkness are independent and separate, each under its own ruler, but while the world of darkness is ignorant of the light, the world of light is naturally cognisant of the darkness. The second triad begins the great duel. Ahriman becomes conscious of the neighbourhood of Light, and his knowledge and enmity awaken together. Rejecting Ormazd's offer of peace, he is admitted as party to a contract by which it is decided that the rest of the great year shall be occupied by the war of which the God of Light alone knows the issue. The remainder of this second season is occupied by Ormazd in the creation of the material universe, which is thus a direct result of the awakened hostility of Ahriman; a bastion, as it were, on the outskirts of the world of light. The second half of the great year thus finds man's home prepared for him, and includes the whole period of his mortal existence, which, according to this chronology, would close in A.D. 2371. The conflict intensifies as its conclusion draws near; visions of horror thicken, and herald visions of splendour closing the storm of Winter, and announcing an eternal Spring. The material universe is to be swept away as the victorious warrior hangs up his helmet and spear. It was called into existence from the necessities of warfare, and with these it ends. The spirits of just men made perfect need it no longer.

Human history, thus set in a framework of supernatural event, might seem in danger of being dwarfed by its setting. How far is this from being the case is shown in the decision of Hegel,<sup>1</sup> that with Persia history takes its start. In the years which have elapsed since he wrote history has made a vast progress, and his assertion may be thought by those whom Egypt has taught to reckon in millenniums rather than centuries to have lost its validity. For the change is not one of extent merely; the nineteenth century saw a change

Persia  
starts  
European  
History.

<sup>1</sup> *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte.* Works, ix. 211.



by which history, we may say, has passed from the domain of literature to that of science. It meets no longer a selective touch, it is held in a collective grasp; and if we are fully to appreciate the scope of Hegel's remark we must make in imagination a slight return towards the state of mind in which Milton wrote in his *History of Britain*,<sup>1</sup> concerning some battle in A.D. 800, "Such bickerings to recount what more worth is it than to chronicle the wars of Kites or Crows flocking and fighting in the Air?" The poet gives the scholar's view of history in exaggeration, perhaps in caricature; the philosopher expresses what is true in it. Milton's was the greatest genius ever turned towards history, yet that sentence from his pen is, in our day, rejected by every one. The observer who recorded anything about a battle between kites and crows which naturalists did not know already would be felt to have made an addition to that study of which history is but the last chapter. Nevertheless it is still permissible to emphasise the Memorabilia of the past. When we repeat that with Persia history begins, we do not mean to deny to previous ages life worthy of deep study; such study has occupied no small proportion of the intellectual energy of our time. But it remains true that, as a continuous narrative, binding the life of ancient Asia with that of modern Europe, history begins with Persia.

by bestow-  
ing a tran-  
sient but  
pregnant  
unity on  
Greece

"The battle of Marathon," says a thinker who has no special sympathy with Greece,<sup>2</sup> "is even for English history more important than the battle of Hastings. If the issue of that day had been different, the Britons and the Saxons might still have been wandering in the woods." India, as much richer in thought than Persia as it is wider in extent, has in this sense nothing to do with us. One might remember every important historical fact which is known to all readers, and forget the very existence of that vast peninsula and ancient civilisation. When we turn to the only other

<sup>1</sup> Prose Works, v. 304, ed. 1853.      <sup>2</sup> J. S. Mill, *Dissertations*, ii. 383.

Aryan people of Asia, we suddenly find ourselves in the midst of familiar names and imperishable memories. The change, as a matter of geography or of race, is as if we had quitted England for Wales; from the point of view of the historian we have crossed an ocean. On that side we guess at chronology, and think ourselves fortunate if we can be sure of a century; on this we reach a domain where events pregnant for all time mark out a year. We have allowed ourselves to say that India has no history; we may add with the same one-sided truth that the student of modern life may ignore all that happened in the ancient world till he comes to the race that worshipped Ormazd and dreaded Ahriman. It is natural that believers in rival deities should start the history of the world. We might indeed fancy that to struggle energetically against all that is regarded as wrong would be to struggle against nothing else, but experience disappoints many pleasing anticipations, and this among them. If war is enthroned in heaven it cannot but be consecrated on earth. To accept the conflict against evil as the business of life is to initiate much conflict besides; to regard the Divine monarch as a conqueror is to enthrone conquest as the ideal of earthly rule. Thus Persia becomes the first conqueror that history remembers. Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, are in comparison forgotten. From the "prehistoric" history that is deciphered from inscriptions and reconstructed from the débris of buried buildings, we return when we speak the name of Persia to the history of historians. Xerxes is almost as familiar to us as an English king; there are indeed but few monarchs in the world's history with whom ordinary readers are better acquainted. Before his appearance on European soil we have isolated facts, combined by more or less vague surmise; after that event the story of the nations is consecutive, coherent, organic. The events connected with his name are almost the most important which ever happened. No other record condenses into so narrow a space the destiny of states, the

lessons of national experience, the image of colossal aims, and defeats no less vast. It starts what, if we ever allow the expression, we may unquestionably select as the most historic phase of history. It was the shock of Persian invasion which overcame the strong mutual repulsion characteristic of the Greek city states, and welded Greece, for the moment, into a unity. It was but for a moment, yet in that meteor flash we discern the beginning of all in the ancient that is most interesting to the modern world.

The  
mythic  
prophet  
of Iran.<sup>1</sup>

Less familiar than the name of the Persian monarch, but no less significant, is that of the founder of the Persian religion. But it introduces us to a strange double personality. The mythic Zoroaster is a mighty magician, an equal antagonist of the author of evil, whom he overcomes by weapons both physical and mental, assailing him with "stones as big as a house,"<sup>1</sup> answering his riddles, deadly as those of the Sphinx, but above all quenching his malign power with the Holy Word. The experience of the actual Zarathustra (to give him his native name) was strikingly unlike this mythic representation. The prophet was rejected by his countrymen as "a weak and pusillanimous man"<sup>2</sup>—a term of opprobrium which surely no disciple would ever have put in the mouth of his enemies, and one which we may therefore accept as having been applied to an actual human being. In him the description given by Isaiah of the ideal Israel seems wonderfully realised—"He was despised and rejected of men." Between his early despondency and his martyrdom there does indeed intervene a period of brilliant success, if we can call it success for such a one to have his religion propagated by the sword, as was the case under his royal convert Vishtasp.<sup>3</sup> But the dejection of his Gathas—a book to be remembered in companionship with the Lamentations ascribed

<sup>1</sup> *S. B. E.* iv. 210.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* xxxi. 11.

<sup>3</sup> Sometimes identified with Hydaspes, the father of Darius, but not by Jackson.

to Jeremiah<sup>1</sup>—remains on the reader's mind as his deepest utterance, while the only element common to both pictures of his career is that of his death at the hands of fanatical invaders of opposite blood and faith.

It is difficult to combine in one view the picture of Zoroaster's triumph over the violence and the wiles of Ahriman and that of his rejection by his countrymen, and he has been sublimated into a myth to overcome the difficulty. But the latest scholarship restores to us as the centre of both the image of a real man, finding his place in the early daylight of history, as a contemporary of Thales, of Draco, and approximately of Buddha. The legendary fame which enfolds him in the mists of prehistoric antiquity may be due to a misunderstanding of passages in the Avestan scriptures which ascribe to him a pre-natal existence; perhaps also to the fact, of which this myth may be regarded as a popular translation, that Zoroaster is the representative and reformer of a creed far older than himself. It is indeed, as has been said above, to the first uprising of the creed associated with his name, that some scholars have traced the severance of the Iranians from the Indians, an event which must have taken place at least a millennium before the date—about 660 B.C.—now accepted as that of his birth.<sup>2</sup> So much unquestionable antithesis of thought and feeling is summed up in this theory that we may confess to feeling its loss a bereavement, and welcome the permission to retain as an instructive parable an account which, as a narrative of facts, we have been forced to surrender. Zoroastrianism being a

The actual  
Zoroaster

<sup>1</sup> It is an interesting, though perhaps merely accidental coincidence, that some Syrian and Arabic reports make Zoroaster a pupil of Jeremiah.

<sup>2</sup> See *Zoroaster, the Prophet of Ancient Iran*, by A. V. Williams Jackson, 1901, pp. 15 and 174. This work, a wonderful monument of industry and learning, is the authority for any statement made here about the prophet and not otherwise accounted for. It must be accepted as having finally rescued him from the region of myth to which the critical spirit of a recent past had consigned him, and set him before us as a historic personage whose life covers the last half of the seventh century B.C. and the early part of the sixth.

religion sharply outlined against a background of heresy, the notion that its believers owed their national existence to their recoil from an adverse creed may be remembered as a clue to its most important characteristics even after we have been taught to place its eponymous prophet thus late in their history.

The  
enigmas of  
Ahriman.

It is at any rate a gain to discover in the struggle of Zoroaster with Ahriman no episode from a war of Gods and Titans, or myth of a storm-god flashing in the lightning from the cloud, but a conflict with those doubts which assail alike the humblest and the highest of those who make the patient and steadfast endeavour to help men and trust God. Zoroaster, as we may know him, discards his supernatural weapons as David the armour of Saul; his reliance is wholly on prayer. He would escape the enigmas of Ahriman not by discovering their answers, but by turning to other problems. "Pray thou thyself within me; ask thou thyself our questions, for a question inspired by Thee is as the question of the mighty."<sup>1</sup> In some sense, he must have felt, that was not true of the questions inspired by Ahriman. His riddles were agonising, torturing, but the "questions of the mighty" held the germ of their own answer. Yet no doubts ever took a darker tinge. "How shall I establish the faith? Why am I unable to attain my wish, and why are my followers so few? In ten years only one man has been converted by me. What is the potent prayer to bring on the Holy Reign? How shall I seek helpers for Thy Order? When shall I discern if You indeed have power over aught?" Nothing even in the Hebrew scriptures, where such doubts find most abun-

<sup>1</sup> *S. B. E.* xxxi. 102, 103. The Five Gathas (or Psalms) of Zarathustra, translated by L. B. Mills; a work in which Darmesteter discovered Platonic ideas, and had therefore to bring down at least three centuries lower than its supposed author, but which is in the main now ascribed to him. It is one of the most profound religious utterances of any age, and might profitably be compared with the *Upanishads* as giving respectively the deepest spiritual truth in the religions of Dualism and Monism.



dant expression, is quite so near despair as the misgiving expressed in that last question, and intensified by the sudden change of address from singular to plural whereby the very personality of the Divine hearer seems to disappear, and his place to be taken by a vague crowd. These indeed are the questions inspired by the spirit of doubt at all times to the seeker after righteousness—the seeker to whom the worst calamities of life would lose their sting if they did not hide God. Zoroaster apparently lived among a set of peaceful herdsmen, and found himself powerless to protect them against the outrages of fierce and irresistible invaders sweeping down on their farms, devastating the scene of their industry, and apparently adding the enmity of an alien creed to the rapacity of a marauding crowd. He was no warrior, and seems to have been as little personally impressive as St. Paul; his aid was spurned by those he would fain have protected, thus leaving his ardent compassion no issue but in prayer. He implores and for long, it seems, he implores in vain—"the understanding of 'Thy Benevolent Mind, that I may propitiate the Soul which cries so bitterly unto thee.'"<sup>1</sup> The oppressed soul is that of a race of tillers and herdsmen, if we take the words literally, indeed it would appear to be that of the kine themselves, and they are certainly included in the circle of his compassion when he prays that Ormazd would grant the sufferers "the peaceful amenities of home, and quiet from men of the evil race." We seem to see the blazing farms and blackened harvests, and to hear the cries of fierce marauders driving off the patient beasts accustomed to the quiet tendance of the stall, and in some sense included in the peaceful amenities of home. Deep and enduring is the prophet's despondency at watching these troubles, yet through all he holds to his confidence that help, when it comes, will be mighty. "When," he cries, "shall the divine Righteousness hasten to me to give me

<sup>1</sup> *S. B. E.* xxxl. 18.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 12.

strength for my mission, O great Creator?" In that last word is his confidence. The Maker will not neglect the work of his own hands.

Ormazd  
the  
Creator.

The Five Gathas of Zarathustra remind the reader of several parts of the Old Testament, but most of the Book of Job. There is exactly the same sense of a solution of all doubt in the steady contemplation of the world as God's creation, and the modern reader sometimes finds the same difficulty in following the logic of both arguments. The prophet of Iran and the man of Uz alike found a response in Nature to the spirit of Trust which we of the twentieth century are slow—perhaps too slow—to discover. It seems as if we and they were contemplating a different universe. "Who gave the sun and stars their undeviating way? Who established that whereby the moon waxes and wanes? Who from beneath hath established the moon and the clouds that they do not fall? Who has yoked the wind to the storm-clouds? Who as a skilful artisan hath made the light and the darkness, sleep and the zest of waking hours? the Auroras, the noon-tides, and midnight, monitors to discerning men, duty's true guides?" Turn from that description of Nature as Zoroaster<sup>1</sup> saw it to the indictment of Nature by John Stuart Mill,<sup>2</sup> and it is hard indeed to remember that the prophet of Iran and the philosopher of the India house saw the same sun, moon, stars, measured their lives by the same light and darkness. Perhaps we might say they did not. The universe presenting only painful problems to the modern thinker might take an aspect more different than can easily be conceived to one who looked at it from the point of view of Zoroaster. It is true that Ahriman was in the fully developed system as much a Maker as Ormazd. But it is difficult to keep that in mind when we read the Gathas. We feel that Ahriman (who is rarely mentioned) is the Destroyer, that

<sup>1</sup> *S. B. E.* xxxi. 113.

<sup>2</sup> *Three Essays on Religion*, his posthumous work.

Ormazd is alone the Creator. For his worshipper the wind yoked to the storm-cloud becomes the type of the Spirit that breathes within the emotions of storm-tossed humanity. The Order of Nature becomes the Righteousness of God, which is also the Righteousness of Man.

To turn from prophecy to history is always disappointing. The transition from these sublime utterances of Zoroaster to the triumph of Zoroastrianism is especially disappointing, the ideal being so high, but only for this reason. It was not the prophet, but a royal convert, Vishtasp, who is responsible for the fact that the propagation of Zoroastrian doctrine was a bloody work; it is, however, only the pure and spiritual character of the utterances just set before the reader which suggest for a moment that their author might have disapproved of methods of conversion such as a great Christian monarch, Charlemagne, carried out more than a thousand years later, in his propagation of Christianity. The religion of conflict must enjoin the severities of warfare, and many fierce denunciations in these early Psalms remind us of the ferocity bred of Dualism. But in the little known to us concerning this Iranian Crusade we find much less that is revolting to the moral standard of our own day than in the Crusades of mediæval Christianity. We find also other methods of conversion such as may be a model to all time. Tradition ascribes to Zoroaster the restoration of eyesight to a blind man,<sup>1</sup> perhaps only allegorising his work as a reformer, but possibly also we are allowed to hope a reminiscence of some actual form of his missionary activity. The crusading zeal of the royal convert and the spiritual earnestness of the teacher spread the faith in

Zoroaster  
and Zoro-  
astrianism.

<sup>1</sup> "As Zardusht was passing a blind man in Dinawar, he told them to take a plant which he described, and to drop the juice of it into the man's eyes; they did this, and the blind man was restored to sight" (Shahrastani of Khorassan (A.D. 1086-1153), given in Jackson, p. 95). Of course a legend sixteen centuries younger than its hero has value only as giving evidence of opinion, but in this point of view it is interesting, especially when we remember that the passage was written under Mahomedan rule.

Ormazd far beyond the land of its birth. A Brahman sage, visiting the court of Vishtasp in order to confute the heresiarch, is said to have returned a zealous missionary of the faith he had come to attack; we have dim rumours of Greek conversions, even of some among the hostile Turanian race. The ardent desire we have seen expressed in the utterances of Zoroaster, "to make all the living believers," is surely always a prelude to the discovery that among men of every creed are to be found some who turn in heart and spirit to the One God. "I pray for him who is saintly with true goodness, whomsoever he may be,"<sup>1</sup> runs the liturgy of the earliest Zoroastrians. Perhaps no other race, when those words were written, had attained so wide an outlook on the hopes of humanity. The prayer, which comes somewhat earlier, "that we may attain to fellowship with thee and thy Righteousness for ever," is one which can be framed only in a spirit of hope that includes the human race. Zoroaster perished in one of those religious wars which form the perennial stumbling-block in the way of religion: but the author of such aspirations as we find in his scriptures must have had them too deeply rooted in his heart to be destroyed even by the frosts and storms of unbelief and hatred.

Dualism  
returns  
towards  
Unity.

The faith here recorded is for all time the typical manifestation of Dualism. But it is also an exhibition of the way in which Dualism, when most vividly conceived, is seen to testify to its own incompleteness. The blessedness of Heaven would, we find, be incomplete for the follower of Zoroaster were it not, in every individual case, the herald of a supreme and permanent triumph, ending the Great Year of human history. The new age is to be preluded by a storm of all the ills of this life, such as is painted in the apocalyptic visions of the New Testament. The land of Iran will be laid waste by invading demons who corrupt with their baleful and lawless influence all they

<sup>1</sup> *S. B. E.* xxxi. 323

do not destroy. In the Divine prophecy announcing these days of affliction we are more than ever reminded of the Gospels; the words of Christ seem copied in the words of Ormazd. "O Zarathust!" he has declared to the prophet favoured by his revelation,<sup>1</sup> "they will lead these Iranian countries into a desire for evil . . . all men will become deceivers, great friends will become of different parties, and respect, affection, and desire for the soul will depart from the world, the affection of the father will depart from the son, and that of the brother from the brother, and the mother will be estranged from the daughter. . . . Those who bear the title of priest and disciple wish evil concerning one another; he speaks vice and they look upon vice; they become enemies of the good, and have no fear of hell." The evils deepen and spread as the deliverance draws near; Nature participates in the disorder and calamity of humanity, "the evil spirit, when it shall be necessary for him to perish, becomes more oppressive and more tyrannical." But these horrors herald a new age in which the desires of all hearts shall be fulfilled. The long conflict, intensified in this last hour of the world's history into a combat between all the powers of good and their antagonist, is to end in a victory so complete that it conceals its own greatness; the world of evil is to vanish; and the earth shall be renovated for the spirits of just men made perfect. A new-born Saviour "makes the creatures again pure," and the long night of the world—such is the whole course of history, in comparison with that glorious to-morrow of the resurrection—shall give place to an eternal day.

The hope of Heaven, for the Zoroastrian, expanded with the disasters and disappointments of earth; the discouragement of rational anticipation gave opportunity for the growth of Faith. The Mahomedan conquest, we might

Emergence  
of Faith in  
the darkest  
hour of  
history.

<sup>1</sup> S. B. E. v. 203-235.



have expected, would have dimmed the idea of a final victory of Ormazd, yet it is under Mahomedan rule that we find the surest anticipations, or at all events the most definite and elaborate declarations, of the final pardon of sinners and disappearance of evil, which we can discover in religious literature. The sense of conflict between good and evil melts, in these later scriptures, so entirely into an expected annihilation of evil, that the term *dualism* ceases to be appropriate. The image of Ahriman fades, much as the image of Satan has faded with us; he is rarely mentioned by name; we feel that something of his personality is already lost, as at the expected restitution of all things it shall vanish altogether. "The wicked who are penitent," we are told by a Parsee priest,<sup>1</sup> "shall be let out of hell;" their sins have been purified by a three days' immersion in molten metal, from which penance they emerge "like those who have lost a burden." "After the renovation of the universe," he continues, "there is no demon, because there is no deceit, and no fiend, because there is no falsity; no evil spirit, because there is no destruction; no hell, because there is no wickedness; no strife or hatred, because there is no anger; no pain, because there is no disease. There is no greediness, because there is no want; and no shame because no deformity. . . . On the disappearance of evil every good is perfected, and in the time of complete goodness it is not possible to occasion any pain or distress whatever, by any means, to any creature." They have no need of the sun, "for the world is a dispenser of light, and all creatures too are brilliant." The triumph of light is complete and enduring. Such hopes, contemporary with such experience, suggest an inner history in strong contrast with the outer, such as we are forced to recognise in the history of the Jewish captivity at Babylon.

<sup>1</sup> Manuskihar, whose life filled the chief part of the ninth century. See Pahlavi Texts, ed. by E. W. West, *S. B. E.* xviii. 115-119.

The blackness of shadow, as well as the brilliancy of <sup>The Persian Epic</sup> light, cast from so lofty an ideal, is well illustrated in the legendary lore of Persia, as it is presented in the *Shah Nama*, or Book of Kings. Here the conflict of good and evil is at its highest. The modern student is fortunate in finding this work accessible in the French rendering of the learned German Orientalist, Jules Mohl, in whose translation it may be said to embody a larger proportion of the learning, thought, and imagination of the world than can be found in any other book not in the first rank. They were collected under the patronage of a Mahomedan monarch by the Persian poet Firdusi,<sup>1</sup> whose history might be quoted as an allegory of the influence and fate of genius. The poet gathered these legends on their native soil, and rendered them in a lengthy Epic, at the request of the great Sultan Mahmoud, but enraged at the perfidy of the ruler who promised a reward in gold which was paid in silver, quitted his court and avenged himself in a bitter satire still authentic as material for history. When the king's tardy remorse was awakened, the caravan which at length conveyed the promised reward was met by the poet's funeral. His daughter, at first scornfully rejecting the belated payment, yielded at last to the entreaties of the royal embassy, and devoted it to the object for which the poet had sought it, the irrigation of his native town. The Book of Kings, though completed only in A.D. 1009,<sup>2</sup> preserves unaltered memories that make the dawn of history; and the long array which blends in one procession Djemschid, the legendary monarch of the early world, and Alexander, the great conqueror, presents the spiritual story of Iran more truly than any record tested by critics and authenticated by monumental inscrip-

<sup>1</sup> The name means Paradise; different reasons are given for his assuming it. His actual name was Abu'l Casim Mansar.

<sup>2</sup> When the poet was nearly eighty. He had been occupied in its composition for thirty or thirty-five years (he mentions both numbers). These particulars may be found in the Life prefixed to Turner Macan's edition in four vols., Calcutta, 1829.

tions. The Book of Kings is self-authenticated by its unmistakable presentation of a people's soul.

a vivid  
presenta-  
tion of  
Dualism

The legends here collected exhibit a glorified delineation of that ideal of pure romantic generosity which becomes discernible only on the black background of wickedness. M. Mohl gives as a reason for the wealth of the record the extent of Persian conquest, the mingled vicissitude and continuity of Persian dominion, and the magnificence of the monuments by which it is recorded. These are no doubt strong conservative influences, yet we may perhaps regard one not mentioned in his enumeration as still stronger, i.e. the spirit of a faith which in its protest against the confusion of good and evil marked all action with a stamp of praise or blame. The ideal of the *Shah Nama* is utterly unlike that of classic or chivalric romance; it presents a curiously modern type of feeling; magnanimous forgiveness meets gigantic crime, generally to fall as its victim, but always to bring out its meaning by contrast with its extreme opposite. In no classical epic, probably in no other epic whatever, does ingratitude play so large a part.<sup>1</sup> Zohak, king of the Arabs, begins his career of superhuman wickedness by yielding to the temptation of Ahriman and murdering his father, and the manifestation of evil shown in the return of evil for good is repeated again and again throughout the series of legends, together with the manifestation of pure good shown in the return of good for evil. Perhaps the most striking instance is in the murder of Iraj, the eponymous hero of the Iranian race, by his brothers, of whom Tur in like manner represents the Turanian. Their antagonism typifies at once the conflict between two races and two ideals; the Persian hero represents the ideal of saintly and chivalric purity, while his Turanian opponent is clothed in all the darkest hues of moral evil. Nothing more

<sup>1</sup> The following passages are taken from Mohl's admirable translation; the epithet may be permitted to his perfect French even without knowledge of the original.

truly Christian has ever been imagined in fiction than the demeanour of Iraj, when the envy of his brothers is aroused by the fond affection of their father, who has enriched his beloved son with the noblest portion of his domain. To their insulting demands that he should surrender the crown of Iran placed on his head by their father, he responds, "O my brothers, dear to me as my own soul, the power that breeds discord is undesired by me. I yield to you the diadem; let my rule and your hatred die together. I do not attack you, I would not afflict the heart of any human being. I would not accept the empire of the world, if that be a cause of trouble to you." The soft answer does not turn away wrath; the generous sacrifice is made in vain. The wicked brothers requite the trust which brings Iridj to them in voluntary defencelessness with treacherous murder, and send his head to their father with a message of scorn. A special significance is attached to the battle which avenges his death by a mysterious voice declaring that the combat about to open is one with Abriman, "who is in his heart the enemy of the Creator." The ideal saint and the ideal fiend, embodied as they are in the types of the Iranian and Turanian races, never were delineated in sharper contrast or with a fuller sense of their mutual dependence. The wickedness of Tur could not reach its height apart from the neighbourhood of magnanimous generosity; the pure and gentle Iraj would lose his halo if the background of perfidious cruelty were withdrawn. We are kept throughout the legend on that boundary line of good and evil, where each is seen in sharpest distinctness against its opposite, and certainly the ideal is brought out by the contrast into a close approximation to Christianity. Where shall we elsewhere match the declaration of one of these legendary monarchs<sup>1</sup> as he mounts the throne? "Happy is he whose memory is perpetuated with blessing, be he a king or a slave! He who ill-treats the poor, or afflicts the unhappy,

<sup>1</sup> Minuchihr, grandson of Iraj.

him I account as an Infidel." Surely no recorded utterance of a monarch comes nearer to the spirit of Christ.

Reflections  
of the  
Persian  
ideal on  
Greek  
literature.

It is not alone in the native romance of Persia that we may discover some reflex and illustration of its ideal. A modern reader finds the best illustrations of that ideal in the imaginative literature of Persia's deadliest foe. The first Greek dramatist, and the Greek author of what we may call the first historic novel, join with the Greek historian in exhibiting the impression made on the mind of their race by its great antagonist, and show us there a marvellous instance of the latent sympathy in all Greek attention. Such latent sympathy, the aim of all true morality, is the native privilege of genius; we see it in every fragment that retains the vivifying influence. Let us take our last look at Persia through this golden atmosphere.

Persian  
loyalty is  
glorified by  
Æschylus,

It is in the oldest, as well as the most illustrious representation of Persia through a Greek atmosphere, that we may discover the most impressive instance of this characteristic of the poet race. The Pæan sung over the vanquished invader of Greece celebrates a Persian quality which on Greek soil found stern discouragement. It is first in Persia, and for many ages only in Persia, that we confront the virtue of loyalty, and the first great dramatic poet of Greece, with what we may call prophetic sympathy, delineates the feeling, dreaded by his own race with a strong detestation, as truly as any modern writer. The evocation to the shade of Darius<sup>1</sup> summons "the god of the Persians," an appellation not new to him in the shades; he was their god in life. The appeal is made with a peculiar tenderness. "Beloved mound of earth holding a beloved man"—it is thus the aged Persians who would recall him address the sepulchre whence he issues. Darius was the foe of Greece not less than Xerxes; he it was who initiated the conflict; yet it would seem as if the poet to some extent entered into the affection which appeals to him; and certainly a nobler

<sup>1</sup> Æschylus, *Persæ*, 646-680.



part is allotted to the august shade than that given to a Greek predecessor in the shadowy land. Achilles would serve a master, and even a needy master, if he might return to the world of the living; the Persian monarch returns to that world at will, "as a ruler in the shades."<sup>1</sup> The awe he inspires is less as a supernatural apparition than as a great monarch. All this, it may be objected, is the picture given by a Greek who had never been in Persia, and could not have understood a word of its language. It is true, but it is that of a Greek who had met Persians in the field, and it is corroborated by all we know of them and their success. Their characteristics are more permanent than those of the adversaries to whom they owe their fame. The accounts of modern travellers illustrate the statements of Herodotus in the case of Persia as they cannot in the case of Greece. Sir John Malcolm appends to his amusing description of the elaborate ceremonial of the Persian court the remark that "the object is to impart to all ranks a reverence and awe for the sovereign, and those to whom he delegates power." Those words were illustrated more forcibly in the sixth century before Christ than they could be when they were written at the beginning of the last century. The self-mutilation by which, according to Herodotus,<sup>2</sup> a great Persian noble gained the credence of the revolted Babylonians and betrayed their city to Darius, gives a profound meaning to the trivial etiquette described by the English envoy. Zopyrus, we are told, indignant that the revolted city should hold his monarch at bay, cut off his own nose and ears, and thus disfigured, passed into the city, and readily obtained the confidence of men to whom he seemed to exhibit such solid ground for regarding him as a fellow-rebel. A European could as little admire as imitate such an act. Still there is in it that sentiment of personal devotion which is admirable to an Englishman and hateful to a Greek.

<sup>1</sup> *Æschylus, Persæ*, 691; compare with *Od.* xi. 488-490.

<sup>2</sup> *Herodotus*, iii. 154, 155.

and justified by  
Xenophon.

If Æschylus glorifies Persian loyalty, Xenophon, it would seem, desires to justify it. His *Cyropaideia*, the earliest romance known, at least by name, to all readers, is an ideal portrait of the founder of the Persian Empire, a delineation of virtue unique in the literature of the classic races.<sup>1</sup> His portrait of his beloved and martyred teacher (itself less attractive perhaps than a veiled allusion in his romance), cannot in the nature of the case be allied with those pictures of heroic achievement which are so easy in fiction, and which lend so much grace to what we may call Christian virtues in his character of Cyrus. It would be impossible to present on any real historic foundation a character at once so faultless and so heroic. The actual Cyrus whom Xenophon accompanied into Persia, and whose identity of name with the hero of his romance has perhaps an influence on his creation which to us seems very childish, had, so far as we can make out, no qualities which remotely suggest that of a saint, and none specially suggestive of a hero. His namesake and legendary predecessor appears, through this medium, as the Black Prince of antiquity, unstained by the cruelties of the actual Black Prince, irresistible in might, chivalrous in generosity, praised by his captives for his mildness, returning the treasure sent him by his conquered enemy, and procuring for him a far greater treasure by recovering for him the alienated heart of his son. His victorious campaigns end as much in winning the love as in overcoming the power of his enemies. The uncle whose sloth and luxury are rebuked by his soldierly virtue is touched by his magnanimity under vast provocation, and he becomes the son-in-law and heir of an envious persecutor. When at last he is established on his throne, sole monarch of the civilised world, he counts none but willing and admiring subjects.

<sup>1</sup> See *Cyropaideia*, Book iii. 1, 14, and 38, for the beautiful allusions of Cyrus to Socrates; and v. 5, 8 *seq.* for his generosity to his uncle. As is always possible in fiction, Xenophon makes the ideal Socrates exhibit virtues which the real Socrates had no opportunity of exercising, but they are a vital, though indirect, tribute to his teacher.

Xenophon's romance might appear an echo from the legends of Persia, which he could not have read; his portraiture of an ideal monarch might have been drawn with the words of a legendary monarch cited above from the *Shah Nama* in his mind. He knew Persia better than most of his countrymen; he had experience of its hideous cruelty, its rotten system of government, its depth of perfidy; yet he chose for an ideal sage and warrior a prince of whom his only knowledge was that he was the founder of the great empire which had threatened the independence of Greece. The Greek writer seems, in contrasting the Persians of his day with their ancestors, to need and suggest an intervening "Fall of Man," and we might suppose, if it were possible, that he wrote his romance to describe just such a contrast between the ideal and the actual Persia which we find in setting side by side their scriptures and their history. It is impossible that he could have known anything of the Avesta, which indeed in his time cannot certainly be said to have existed. But some adumbration of the Persian belief in the two principles seems to have reached him, as it had his contemporary Aristotle. At least the struggle between good and evil, the mystery of that inward dualism by which self seems at once to lose and double its meaning, is represented on his page in striking accordance with Persian belief. "I have plainly two souls, O Cyrus," says a Persian soldier who is struggling with his passion for a beautiful captive, "for a single soul cannot be at once good and bad."<sup>1</sup> These words may be taken as representing Persian feeling as it revealed itself to the soldier-pupil of Socrates. He was awakened by the teaching of his master to an interest in the moral life of those among whom he sojourned; and though he knew the nation only in its military aspect, he here records that consciousness of a vast conflict which, if we may trust its scriptures, was the dominant influence in its moral life.

<sup>1</sup> *Cyropaidéia*, vi. 1, 41.

Herodotus  
brings a  
like tribute  
from  
history.

To these purely ideal representations of Persian character on its nobler side we may add one taken from history as seen through Greek eyes. At some time between the invasions of Greece under Darius and Xerxes, the sacrificial omens proved unfavourable for so long a period at Sparta that serious religious apprehension was awakened, and after many searchings of heart, the displeasure of the god was ascribed to a sacrilegious murder.<sup>1</sup> When Darius had sent two heralds to demand "earth and water"—*i.e.* submission to Persia—the Spartans had, in defiance of the sacrosanct character of these ambassadors, thrown them into a well "that they might take water thence." The need of expiation for an act recognised by both races as a crime was felt, and an appeal made to the community for men willing to make atonement was answered by two noble and wealthy Spartans, Sperthias and Bulis, who had everything in the world to lose, and who volunteered to leave all, and undergo what would probably be a death by torture, in order to wash away in their blood the guilt contracted by their city. With this aim they made the long journey from Sparta to Susa, and presented themselves before Xerxes, ready to suffer his will. To suffer his will, but not to do it, they indignantly refused to comply with the command to prostrate themselves in the awful presence. "It was not their way," they haughtily objected, "to worship men—no, not though their heads were to be buried in the earth." They knew that much worse things than that might await them at the hands of an angry sovereign, but like the "drunken private of the Buffs," commemorated in our own time in graceful verse,<sup>2</sup> they refused to bow the knee before an irresponsible, and as far as they were concerned, almighty monarch. But the foe of Greece, we learn from the Greek historian, treated them with unexpected magnanimity. Xerxes would not, he declared, imitate the crime he was invited to punish, and the

<sup>1</sup> Herodotus, vii. 134–136.

<sup>2</sup> By Sir Francis Doyle.



Spartans who had approached him with what must have appeared to him atrocious insult, were dismissed unharmed. No courtly historian could exhibit a patron monarch in a more becoming light than that here thrown by Herodotus on the oppressor of his race, and a narrative presenting so striking a specimen of Greek impartiality is also a marvellous tribute to an ideal of Righteousness, even although in the latter character it is so solitary that it is difficult to give it its due weight.

The connection between that which men admire and do is perplexing always, sometimes bewildering. We have constantly to choose as a basis of our judgment between men's words or their deeds, and we shall find, in defiance of the proverb, that it is sometimes the former which reveal most of their true selves. When seeking the moral ideal of a nation we must, at all events, boldly adopt this as our canon. The relation between the history of Persia and all indications of Persian faith and ideal is one which in an individual we should describe as hypocrisy. But there is no such thing as national hypocrisy. We have in Persian history to recognise a lofty ideal—an ideal much higher than anything in classical literature—as perfectly real and sincerely accepted; and on the other hand a sickening narrative of treachery and cruelty, taking us, we may say, into the company of a set of fiends.<sup>1</sup> We must not forget either fact, and we have striking reminders of both. The race that worshipped Ormazd must always, for those who contemplate it through Greek eyes, retain something of the aspect of Ahriman, even after such tributes from Greek pens as we have cited. The reader of Herodotus shudders at the possible dominion of Persia as the triumph of all that is hateful, he sees the combat of Ahriman with Ormazd in flesh

The Ideal  
and the  
actual  
morality a  
perplexing  
contrast

<sup>1</sup> Darius boasts in the Behistun inscription of tortures inflicted on his enemies such as in modern Europe the cold and callous could not bear to imagine. There is something in the fact of such deeds being carved on the rock which brings home to the mind the pleasure in inflicting pain more than the actions themselves do.



and blood. But we may read in writings dearer to us than even the literature of Athens the lesson that no race really plays throughout the part of Ahriman. The only other ancient people as well known to the modern world as the victors of Marathon and Salamis found a deliverer in Persia; the Jew even felt the Persian faith akin to his own. The Great King is the Shepherd of Israel;<sup>1</sup> Isaiah names the founder of the Persian empire as the Christ. We feel, as we turn from the Ionian to the Jewish writer, that there may be an Ormazd and Ahriman in every nation as in every man.

But one  
not wholly  
inexpli-  
cable.

The shadow thrown from a strenuous belief in Righteousness is an inclination to cruelty. The earthly ruler who shares the claim of the heavenly to uncritical obedience needs a special endowment of gentleness not to become a tyrant. Herodotus tells us<sup>2</sup> that a wealthy Lydian, who had put his fortune at the disposal of Xerxes on his march to Greece, emboldened by the Great King's gratitude, ventured to ask a boon "vast to himself, small to the monarch"—the restoration of one out of his five sons, all serving in the army; and that his petition was answered by the sight of his son's bloody corpse! Xerxes could even, as we have seen, exhibit magnanimity for those who did not come within the circuit of his royal claim; but where that was concerned leniency became impiety, for it was not the mere claim of self which he felt outraged when a subject withheld obedience, it was something that we may best describe by calling it religion. To unite these claims in one's own person, it seems, provides a temptation which average human nature is unable to resist. In our own day it is the temptation rather of weakness than of strength, and in this form perhaps not less baleful.

Aspiration  
eclipses  
duty and  
prepares  
recoil.

To those profound perplexities which arise when we compare an ideal with the conduct which should set it forth the answer should be sought in the warning: "If

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah xlv. 28 and xlv. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Herodotus, vii. 27, 28, and 38, 39.

ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them;" a warning which would surely suggest, if its force were not blunted by familiarity, that an ideal may add difficulty to conduct. It is not impossible to mistake the thought for the deed. The ascent into a lofty atmosphere both exercises and satisfies the moral nature, and its healthy glow is mistaken for the sanction of conscience. 'To gaze upwards will not always prepare the gazer to climb upwards; the pleasing contemplation may unfit him for the arduous endeavour. When a man is penetrated by the "enthusiasm of humanity" he is apt to be disinclined to sacrifice his own preference to that of another. His aspirations being dissociated from effort, he is not disposed to recognise those claims which recall him to it. And then, moreover, we have to reckon with the keenness of disappointment which is always the shadow of a lofty ideal. There is no bitterness like the recoil from discarded loyalty. "Vain pomp and glory of this world, I hate ye," expresses a renunciation far less passionate and enduring than that which we might express by the alteration: "Vain promise of a better world, I hate thee." It is not the Wolseys of this world who are most ready to destroy what they have adored; it is those who have been the most glowing aspirants after a higher one.

No important religion owning any adherents in our time has so few, it is said, as the faith of ancient Iran. But the small and dwindling sect of the Parsees, its nominal representatives, give no measure of the real scope of that which is permanent in its belief—a scope of which the extent may be suggested in saying that Puritanism and the Roman Catholic Church, from different points of view, might each be regarded as its re-incarnation. In studying the contrasted faiths of India and Persia we have been led to contemplate an issue which always divides the world. Pantheism takes various names and Dualism takes various names, but they remain in essence the same; each is successively entangled

The moral  
bers of  
India and  
Persia.

in and disguised by different associations; and in calling one the spirit of Science and the other the Spirit of Religion, we adopt a nomenclature as little misleading as any that is brief and popular. "If you say that God is everywhere, in the sense that no place is empty of His presence, you assert an undeniable truth; if you make the statement in the sense that there is no nearer and no further from Him, you utter, I believe, the largest falsehood that could be framed." These words of a religious thinker of our time,<sup>1</sup> no less applicable to the Divine presence in time than in space, explain the consternation felt by religious persons at being required to believe that they were living in the great week of Creation. The narrative of Creation, as we remember it, is the work rather of an English poet than of a Hebrew prophet, but the germ elaborated by Milton was present in Genesis, and to give it up was to lose all that seemed to account for the existence of evil in God's creation. *Paradise Lost*, the work which for so many English readers has supplanted and confused the record of Genesis, sets forth a cosmogony in all essentials the same as that of Persia. In both versions of the drama it is the antagonism of a supernatural being which starts the course of terrestrial history; the creation is its result. Satan, like Ahriman, is from the first a rival, and we might say a successful rival, of the Divine Being; he invades His Creation, and goes far to make it his own possession, while the triumph of the celestial adversary is in both religions postponed to a remote future. And looking back on both we may recognise, in a different degree and a very different form, the essential antagonism between the spirit of unity and the spirit of dualism. While Puritan England was absorbed in the conflict of good and evil, the contemporary movement of science—the start of our Royal Society, the career of Newton—embodied the counteracting influence which at all times either provokes or is provoked by the spirit of

<sup>1</sup> James Martineau, *Hours of Thought*.

dualism. We shall rarely fail to discover some such sign, faint it may be and possible to ignore, that under the prevalence of either impulse a reaction is preparing. The antagonism between the two may express itself in a form in which one side must be true and the other false, but it is possible to regard this antithesis not so much as a choice between logical alternatives as a movement by which the world of things may be successively reflected in the world of thought. At a time when almost all that was thought stationary is pronounced moving—when it would almost seem as if movement were the only actual existence in that world which used to be regarded as material—it should not be difficult to believe that truth, for finite beings, consists in an orderly and rhythmic change in the point of view. To seek to discern the moral universe apart from such a change of attitude will perhaps hereafter be recognised as once more to listen to the voice of the serpent, and give ear to the promise “ye shall be as gods knowing good and evil.”

## CHAPTER IV

### GREECE AND THE HARMONY OF OPPOSITES

The Greek  
spirit  
remote  
both from  
Dualism  
and from  
Pantheism.

WE only half understand the principle of dualism when we contrast it with the principle of unity. The spirit that sees all events, all characters, all phenomena, as the development or symbol of a great conflict between two fundamental principles is not more antagonistic to the spirit which sees them as the various expression of one, than each is to that which looks with an impartial interest on the whole play of natural impulse, and finds in the struggle of life's opposing forces the appropriate gymnastic for all that is most truly human. It is only on a superficial view that we could suppose this latter spirit an ally of either antagonist against its enemy. According to our point of view, it is either impartially friendly to both or impartially hostile to both. "Life," said the Indian, "is the seeming change in one unchangeable reality; let us neglect what seems and turn to what is." "Life," said the Persian, "is the actual conflict between two deadly foes; let us take part with the good and oppose the evil." In contrast to both of these the Hellene discovered some link with every creed and every impulse which has ever moulded human aspiration and desire; and each succeeding race may recognise a special bequest in the vast legacy. The typical expression of this spirit remains fixed in the brief records of a people which, during its few centuries of pre-eminence, more deeply influenced the intellectual development of humanity than those we have been considering throughout their millenniums of existence. It is the spirit of the artist in all history; it moulds, there-



fore, the poetry, the art, and the philosophy of the artist people. It does not turn from what *seems* to absorb itself in what is, as the Pantheism of India. It does not rank itself on the side of righteousness, and find its very life in a conflict with evil, as the dualism of Persia. It admits no great fundamental antithesis, either of illusion and reality or of good and evil; indeed, from some points of view, the two hostile doctrines which severally accept these contrasts as the leading distinctions of the moral world, are nearer to each other than is either to that habit of mind which finds truth in a union of opposites, and the aim of life in its struggle.

This Greek spirit, with the imaginative sympathy that lies at the heart of genius, makes an apparent approach to-  
 wards both members of the great antithesis. Greek philosophy often seems akin to the view which regarded the Universe as a mere rainbow in the light of some central unity, itself "only to be described by No, no." With how many a quotation from Plato might we illustrate that affinity! The best known of all, perhaps, is the parable in the *Republic* describing mankind as the inhabitants of a cave, on the wall of which they discern the shadows of objects beyond their reach as long as they contemplate the wall of their prison.<sup>1</sup> This is a kindred thought to the belief in Maya only so far as both are instances of that belief in the abiding reality beyond shifting appearances which belongs to all philosophy. Plato regards it as the actual aim of philosophy to turn the eyes of the learner from the darkness to the light. It is impossible at once to gaze steadily downwards into the gloom and upwards towards the glow, and those who look back to the shadows with eyes fresh from the sunshine seem to the prisoners, still forcibly turned from the light, to have lost their eyesight; but the light

But reflects  
gleams  
from each.

<sup>1</sup> *Republic*, pp. 515, 516. The shadows, being cast by images, not by the living creatures which these represent, are doubly removed from reality.

is there to see and to see by. It is otherwise with the Indian ideal. Not light but darkness typifies that reality which human intelligence can describe only by negation. The two schools of thought are separated, spiritually as well as literally, "as far as the east is from the west."

Most  
vividly  
from  
dualism.

The same aloofness and the same sympathy is revealed wherever it is possible for Greek feeling to approach Persian dualism ; and here, at times, the approach seems closer. We have seen an approach towards it in the romance of Xenophon. And where shall we find a delineation more suggestive of the great Tempter than in the picture given by Euripides of the Goddess who impersonates the lusts of the flesh? or of an embodiment of ideal purity than in the opening invocation to the Virgin Goddess from *Hippolytus*!

"To thee this wreathed garland from a green  
And virgin meadow bear I, O my Queen!  
No evil hand may cull it, only he  
Whose heart hath known the heart of Purity." <sup>1</sup>

A knowledge which Artemis herself, appearing visibly at the end of the play, vindicates for her worshipper. Her antagonist and rival, Aphrodite, offended at his neglect, has inspired his stepmother, Phædra, wife of Theseus, with a passion for him, against which she finds her only refuge in a self-inflicted death. But first, in that last moment of torture the terrible truth of Milton's "lust, hard by hate" is manifest, the unhappy Queen decides—

"He shall not stand so proud where I have lain  
Bent in the dust! Oh, he shall stoop to share  
The life I live in and learn mercy there." <sup>2</sup>

Theseus, arriving to find her on her bier, and vainly seeking

<sup>1</sup> *Hippolytus*, 73, 74, 79–81, translated by Professor Murray (1902). The individual lines in this beautiful translation may appear to get rather too much out of the Greek, but the spirit of the whole seems to me marvellously reproduced.

<sup>2</sup> The spirit of love changed to hatred in Phædra, compared with the dying forgiveness of Hippolytus, expresses the several influences of the goddesses of love and of purity. Compare 2 Sam. xiii. 1–16, especially 15.

to learn from the distracted chorus the manner of her death, takes from "her dear dead hand" a tablet he deems some last charge for her children, and breaks the familiar seal to discover—such is the poet's power that the reader of to-day shares his horror—the accusation of Potiphar's wife. The Athenian monarch does not copy the leniency of the Egyptian; Theseus devotes his innocent son to a fearful death, and it is against this background of calumny and injustice that the spotless holiness of the martyr shines forth with dazzling lustre. While he protests his innocence, he keeps back every word that would betray his calumniator; he listens to his father's outrageous fury with calm remonstrance, and strives with his dying breath to soften the pangs of a remorse awakened too late. "Father, where art thou?" he cries, when sight has failed; "Oh, thou sufferest sore."<sup>1</sup> It would be hardly possible to set by the side of this delineation a higher ideal of every Christian grace except that of humility, inconceivable to a Greek. So close is the resemblance that a thoughtful and learned Frenchman, who knows the Attic stage better than Christian literature, has ranged Euripides among the originators of Christian morals.<sup>2</sup> M. Havet's opinion will not be shared by many readers who know both. The moral of the Hippolytus is not "How blessed is the life of purity," but rather "How mistaken is the refusal to recognise all human impulse as legitimate." Hippolytus has indeed his reward, the deathbed vision of the divine Virgin exchanges torture for resignation and a faint mystic hope. But his passionate purity offends against the Greek law of "nothing in excess," and the goddess whose vengeance was attracted by his neglect has, equally with the one to whom his life has been devoted, her place on Olympus.

<sup>1</sup> 1407, take in 1409.

<sup>2</sup> *Le Christianisme et ses Origines*, 2nd ed. 1873, p. 139. M. Havet considers that Hippolytus represents the Pythagorean idea of holiness.

It knows  
no irrecon-  
cilable foe

The Greek dread of extravagance is not merely different from the Christian dread of sin; it is, in some sense, opposed to it. In its most characteristic aspects Greek feeling is antagonistic to all zeal for righteousness, to all hatred of iniquity. It metes out its interest according to other laws than those which regulate moral judgments; it demands only the play of opposite forces and the balance of contending impulses; and wherever these are found there is the soil for its roots and the atmosphere in which its blossoms may expand in all their beauty. Against such an ideal the conscience must always embody some kind of protest. The spirit which pursues virtue recoils from the impartiality of that which seeks a vivid expression of all human interests, desires, and aversions—in other words, from the dramatic spirit. “Ce que vous quittez,” says Fénelon, “n’est plus bon à vos yeux qu’à vos mains.” No one could at the same moment remember that and create an Iago. Greece represents the moral ideal of genius, with all its wealth and all its peril. Greek art is penetrated with that spirit of balanced judgment, of elastic sympathy, which, allowing vehement utterance to all feeling, refuses decided predominance to any. There is fierce wrath, passionate love, and sympathy with both, even when the object is identical. Life is conflict; but all conflict is gymnastic, a needed exercise if man’s powers are to attain their full development. Greek mythology, Greek legend, Greek history are all full of the idea of a struggle, but we never find that any combatant can be consistently and ultimately regarded as a principle of evil. As compared with the Persian ideal, we have exchanged a moral contrast of light and darkness for an artistic balance of light and shade.

and sees  
falsehood  
as ignor-  
ance.

The idea of a primæval conflict, symbolised by the great phenomena of nature and typical of all that is most impressive in human history, was the inheritance of the Aryan race, and nowhere more prolific in myth and legend than

on the soil of Greece. But it never develops there into any parable of the conflict of good and evil. Greek mythology knows of neither an Ahriman nor an Ormazd. Whatever is evil is vague; the objects of antagonism bear the aspect of things rather than of persons. The conflict repeats in a condensed form the work of primitive man; the hero must slay monsters, drain marshes, go through arduous toils in subduing the powers of nature, but his struggles never take the aspect of a duel; he knows no spiritual foe. Hercules is a great hunter, a daring traveller; not a wrestler with any principle of evil. He and all those heroes of whom he is a typical example express the spirit of civilisation overcoming the lower forces that rise up against it; never the spirit of righteousness setting itself to overcome the spirit of iniquity. When mythology and philosophy come nearest to such an antithesis, we see most clearly how impossible it was to the Greek mind. Plato never really recognised the life of the conscience. He knows only two principles of spiritual antagonism—the pleasant in contrast to the painful, the true in contrast to the false. His own disastrous experience as a guide of the ruler who embodied his ideal of a philosopher on the throne may have shown him that clear vision does not always imply right action; and the dialogue of his melancholy old age appears to bear some traces of the dislocating shock of that discovery.<sup>1</sup> But from all his characteristic utterances we should conclude that the supreme glory which centred in the idea of Truth absorbed all excellence and left nothing to be appropriated by that of Duty. 'Truth, he thought, is to man's nature as

<sup>1</sup> *The Laws*, 686, a dialogue in which it is significant that Socrates does not appear. It is supposed to have been written after 356 B.C., when Plato would be at least seventy four and Socrates had been dead forty-three years. Plato had said (*Republic*, 473-474) that till philosophers became kings, or kings philosophers, there was no chance of an ideal State, and the issue of his summons to Socrates by the elder Dionysius must have taught him the disappointing lesson that there was not much chance of it even then.



light to the eye, as air to the lungs; if it were adequately presented to its appropriate organ, all that man wanted would be achieved. If this were really so, it would be as unnatural to imagine man seeing what is right and not doing it, as it is to imagine him seeing what is true and not believing it. Thus the word *ought* would be emptied of its meaning. To those who have given us the very name of Ethics we are indebted for a large part of all that has made Morality in its wider sense interesting and vivid. In the narrower sense, in which it traces the claim of Duty, we can only say that Greek thought, withdrawing us from the great watershed of right and wrong, beckons us into realms whence we see the mountain as the cloud.

And —  
admits no  
supreme  
claim.

Thus while Greek philosophy is non-moral, Greek mythology is non-theistic. To the Greek mind, in its most natural and characteristic attitude, the Divine Being was out of sight. Greek feeling is not atheistic; it denies nothing that human instincts have ever asserted. But it hurries on to other realms; it never lingers before the Divine Throne. We hear in its deeper music the note of a profound reverence and faith, but it is not a characteristic note: Homer knows nothing of it. Greek mythology knows neither a truly Divine nor a truly Satanic being. If we are to associate the Greek divinities with either, they come nearer the last. The desire of Plato to banish poets from his Republic is justified by many passages in the *Iliad*; the gods are, from a moral point of view, inferior to the objects of their capricious protection and dislike. "The law of Mithra is a thousand-fold between nations,"<sup>1</sup> we remember; but Greek mythology enthrones on Olympus a deity who plays the very opposite part from Mithra. The Athene of Homer takes the same attitude towards Truth as the Aphrodite of Euripides towards Purity. When the prospect of a single combat between the rival chiefs brings hope of peace to the weary armies before Troy, it is she who bends her irresistible might

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 119.

to defeat these hopes and instil treachery into a Trojan heart. The description of her descent (in the guise of a shooting star) recalls the image of Satan in *Paradise Lost*. "Betake thee to the rival hosts,"<sup>1</sup> Zeus addresses her, "and devise that the Trojans shall attack the Achaians in defiance of the treaties concluded between them. He hastened a messenger who needed no spur; down she darted from the summits of Olympus like a bright meteor, stirring awestruck wonderment in both armies; and approached, in the guise of a sturdy spearman, the god-like Pandarus, who stood surrounded by well-shielded battalions. 'Hast thou the courage, O son of Lycaon, to win thyself glory and substantial reward by despatching from thy bow an arrow aimed at Menelaus. Vow a hecatomb to the archer god Apollo, and fit the shaft to the bow.' Thus addressing him she persuaded his feeble mind; loud shrieked the strained cord, forth darted the murderous shaft; but Athene, guarding Menelaus, repelled its onset, as a mother drives the fly from her sleeping infant." This abridged translation omits nothing whence the reader may augur any shade of disapproval in the mind of the poet for the inspiration of Athene or the deed of Pandarus. If we turn to the earliest and, in some respects, the most characteristic English rendering of the *Iliad*, we find English feeling forcing its way into the version in defiance of the text. Chapman tells us of Athene that

"She sought for Lycian Pandarus, a man that, being bred  
Out of a faithless family, she thought was fit to shed  
The blood of any innocent, and break the covenant sworn;  
He was Lycaon's son, whom Jove into a wolf did turn,  
For sacrificing of a child, and yet in arms renowned  
As one that was inculpable."

Not a word of this is to be found in the text except the statement that Pandarus was the son of Lycaon, yet to a modern the addition supplies something we add almost unconsciously to the original, softening, however inadequately,

<sup>1</sup> *Iliad*, iv. 70.

the divine crime by at least throwing some part of the responsibility on the human agent. We can hardly without some such endeavour acquiesce in the state of mind by which the poet saw nothing unnatural in a narration which assigned to the Goddess of Wisdom the rôle of Satan in Paradise.

It confuses  
the  
Tempter  
and the  
Saviour.

This representation of the divine Athene as the inspirer of treachery is a striking illustration of the truth that no religion can be consistently non-moral. It is not enough to say that Olympus reflects the inconsistencies and contradictions of human beings, it must be confessed enormously to exaggerate them; and we are reminded, as we contemplate such a picture, that man's conception of the Divine, if it is not to rise above the human world, must sink far below it. And thus the characteristically Greek spirit is irreligious, and was felt as such even by the deeper thinkers among the Greeks themselves. It knows of no spiritual foe to humanity, but any god may take the place of such a foe; those promptings to evil which Christianity has associated with a single invisible personality are in Greek mythology diffused throughout the whole realm of supernatural agency and suggestion. To the Greek the Tempter and the Redeemer were but different aspects of one agent. Like an eagle hovering on poised wing above the summit of a mountain range, the poet-race exchanged, as it were with a stroke of the wing, the slope that sends its waters to the east for that which sends its waters to the west, and confused in its lofty gaze the springs of mighty rivers which increase their remoteness with every foot of progress, and find their issue in oceans that are thousands of miles apart.

Greek im-  
partiality  
seen in the  
greatest  
poet of  
Greece

That moral indifference which brings into so close a neighbourhood the sources of good and ill must always arouse a certain protest in the seeker after absolute truth, and in the Greek atmosphere the protest shares the glow of the genius it opposes. Its earliest expression is almost coeval with its object, or at least comes to us with something of the same impression of hoary antiquity. It was a

countryman of the traditional Homer in the sixth century before Christ who lifted up his voice against the theology of the great poet, and declared that

"Such things of the gods are related by Homer and Hesiod  
As to mankind would be shame and abiding disgrace,  
Promises broken, and thefts, and mutual treachery."<sup>1</sup>

The protest is expanded in a well-known passage in the *Republic* of Plato, where he seems to be recalling this very quotation. "The fiction now in vogue,"<sup>2</sup> he says, "such as Hesiod and Homer and other poets have created it, is open to the gravest objection, ascribing as it does evil deeds to the gods, and must not be read by the young in our commonwealth," and he names as one among many instances the inspiration of the treachery of Pandarus by Athene cited above. The restrictions which the Platonic Socrates proceeds to impose outdo in their narrowness almost any Evangelical code for pious families. The moral thinker and the dramatist are in every age united by common objects and separated by divergent impulses, but never do we see either their union or divergence as clearly as in this attempt of the most poetic of philosophers to banish poets from his Republic. It shows us on the one hand the large range and profound influence of Greek poetry, and on the other hand the recoil of that spirit which seeks the Absolute from all which occupies itself with relation. The two are elements of all literature, for nothing that deserves the epithet literary ignores either the truths independent of time or the mutable emotions of humanity, but on Greek soil we recognise the nearness and the antagonism of these two things with a unique vividness. And while all would allow, if they judged the *Iliad* like any other book, that such passages as that which makes Athene an inspirer of treachery are blots on its bright colour, they yet feel a refreshing influence in that

<sup>1</sup> Xenophanes, *Fragment* vii., ed. by Karsten.

<sup>2</sup> *Republic*, 377.



non-moral character, even though here and there it becomes immoral. We take up the *Iliad* with a sense of escape from all we long to forget, because it is a picture of vivid stirring life reflected on the still medium of neutral observation. The poem which fixes the Greek tongue takes its most pathetic, most inspiring images from the foes of Greece. The noblest utterance of patriotism and the purest picture of domestic love are both from the Trojan side. It is Hector who has given a motto to the patriots of every age—

“One omen best—our country to defend.”<sup>1</sup>

And where in all literature shall we find a more touching description of family life than in the scene where the same hero lays aside the helmet which has terrified his infant that he may take him in his arms for a last embrace?<sup>2</sup> The Trojan king is, in all his dealings with the woman who has brought ruin on his kingdom a pattern of chivalrous courtesy,<sup>3</sup> and even the effeminate Asiatic prince wins a certain sympathy by his candid confession under the rebuke of his heroic brother.<sup>4</sup> The intercourse which takes place between the warrior chiefs in the intervals of battle has nothing fierce or hostile; it is the discourse of brave men who hope to kill each other, but who in the meantime have no difficulty in recognising each other's nobility. We have described this excellence in negative terms, but it is in the highest degree positive. It is the secret which gives brightness of colour and delicacy of form to every touch. Achilles—Hector—Helen—all live and move before us, because their creator has sympathy for all. This makes the *Iliad* not a national but a human epic.<sup>5</sup> We see the Greek impartiality at its highest if we turn from the Greek to the Persian epic and mark the contrast. The *Shah Nama* is, for the most

<sup>1</sup> *Iliad*, xii. 243.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* vi. 472.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* iii. 161–165.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* iii. 59.

<sup>5</sup> Impartiality is both too moral and too negative a term for this special Greek quality, but I can think of no other, in a single word.



part, a series of struggles between heroes of virtue and monsters of wickedness; between a people of light (Iran, the Persian race) and a people of darkness (Turan). Where a hero falls it is through the temptation of Ahriman. Zohak, the serpent king, who bears on his shoulders twin snakes sprung from a kiss of the Evil One, has yielded to impious seductions; promises of splendid dominion have led him to plunge into guilt, and his crimes have earned an awful punishment; he is not to be speedily slain, but to die a death of agony. How unlike anything in the *Iliad*! Where Homer gives us fierce anger Firdusi gives us bitter hatred. Where Firdusi gives us a combat of saints and devils Homer gives us a struggle of hero with hero. The *Iliad* can never grow old, because it is committed to no temporary, no local emotion; it sets no stamp of condemnation on any actor of the drama; it claims sympathy in turn for all.

This we may say of the poem which stands on the threshold of Greek literature, and to which, to a certain extent, Greece owes its unity. And it is equally true of that work of literary genius which, of all that the modern world feels supremely valuable in the bequest of Greece, has least of the poetic spirit. Few immortal works treating of a similar subject can be so dissimilar as the *Iliad* and the history which Thucydides has left of the Peloponnesian war. The contrast of poetry and prose, of the simple child-like spirit of imaginative faith and of cold wary scepticism, of growing fancy and of realistic effort after accurate narration—all these are brought to a climax when we set the two works side by side; they seem to belong to different worlds. And yet we cannot forget that they belong to the same race. We can hardly say that Thucydides and Homer have anything else in common except the quality which we have somewhat inadequately entitled impartiality, but the exception is enough to make them kindred authors. It is almost as difficult to discern any varying colour in the sympathies of the historian as in those of the poet;

and in its  
most  
prosaic  
historian.

the narration keeps its hard disinterested accuracy, whether it sets before us the fate of Athenian or of Spartan, as the poem keeps its glowing richness of colouring whether it paints the fortune of Trojan or of Greek. This equality of interest is of necessity more striking on the page of the historian than in the song of the bard. Homer relates no deed of the Greek army that may be set by the side of the taking of Melos as a specimen of ruthless barbarity; and Thucydides, even in that part of the narrative which must be due to his fancy, shows not the faintest temptation to soften a line in the picture of his country's crime. That the Athenians slew the adult males, and enslaved the women and children of a State which had done nothing to incur their enmity, was a fact which the great Athenian writer was obliged to recognise; but when he describes the pleadings on either side which must in great measure be due to his own fancy, we might have looked for some indication of a wish to make out a case for his own countrymen, such, for instance (though no even approximate parallel can be charged to England), as an English writer might betray in narrating the bombardment of Copenhagen or the fate of Drogheda. Assuredly we shall not find it. "It is hard indeed," the Melians concede,<sup>1</sup> "to contend against your power and your fortune; yet we lose not our faith in Divine aid, for we are innocent and confronted with the unrighteous." "We are quite easy as to that," reply the Athenians. "It is certainly a law for human beings that they should take who have the power, and we suppose this law holds good in the Divine world also." What reader would not suspect, in reading that dramatic fragment, that the sympathies of the writer were with the vanquished? Perhaps in some sense they were, but not in any sense that made Thucydides less of an Athenian, not in any sense that shows itself in one word of condemnation when he comes to speak of the cruel fate of those whose trust in

<sup>1</sup> Thucydides, v. 85-116.

Divine aid was rewarded by utter failure. He sympathised with the Melians only so far as he threw himself on to their side with dramatic disinterestedness of attention, only so far, we may say, as he was a true Greek.

The grand impartiality of Thucydides is not only national, it is personal. For twenty years the great historian was an exile from his native city. He was a general in the war he has made known to posterity, and it is evident that he was banished for the failure to relieve an important city; but the two facts are mentioned so slightly that the reader has to discover the connection for himself. Though his chronological method is one of somewhat tiresome accuracy and precision, he tells us of his own exile out of its proper place, and in a mere parenthesis of his narrative. "I happened to be in exile for twenty years after my command at Amphipolis, and thus to have great advantages for ascertaining the facts from both sides,"<sup>1</sup> is all he tells us about it. The unfortunate command which led to this fortunate punishment is told with the same brief, disinterested lightness. There is not a word in the few lines referring to it which would have led us to think he was speaking of himself if it were possible to doubt the fact. A historian of Greek literature has been so much impressed with this reserve, that he explains it by supposing it to be due to the consciousness of guilt. Thucydides "neither attempts to vindicate himself nor specifies the ground of his sentence,"<sup>2</sup> his critic thinks, because he had been more occupied in looking after his own property than in the interests of his country. The fact may have been so. There is nothing whatever in literary impartiality to secure personal disinterestedness. So temperate a reference to the incident, by one who might have given his own colouring to the narrative, does

In Thucydides impartiality rises into magnanimity.

<sup>1</sup> Thucydides, v. 26.

<sup>2</sup> *A Critical History of the Language and Literature of Ancient Greece*, by Wm. Mure of Caldwell, v. 40.

not look like consciousness of guilt; but in any case what it expresses is the reticence demanded by a fine sense of proportion, such as that which gives the art and literature of Greece immortal predominance.

In Aristotle  
it moulds  
Philoso-  
phy.

This sense of proportion is inwrought with the very web of Greek thought. "The art of measurement," says the Platonic Socrates, "is that which would save the soul."<sup>1</sup> Strange expression to modern ears! yet it is the basis of that system of ethics which still keeps its hold on modern thought. The pupil of Plato expanded that statement into the doctrine that virtue must be sought always in a mean between excess and defect. The golden mean! to an Englishman images of dulness and conventionality rise up at the words. The very expression "mediocrity" opposes itself to this ideal. Such a barrier, though far less visible to the race dowered with genius and conscious of boundless momentum, would seem to be not altogether hidden from Aristotle himself. Virtue, he tells us, with a confusing candour very characteristic of him, is from some points of view itself an extreme.<sup>2</sup> But this is a momentary concession; to him the mean takes, in the moral universe, the place taken in the physical universe by that law which marks out the course taken by the planet; it too is a diagonal, the result of warring forces. What draws the spirit one way was to the Greek ideal no more evil than what draws it another. Rashness hurls it away from its true centre; cowardice makes the centre a goal.<sup>3</sup> A wise manliness finds its orbit settled by the contest of these conflicting forces and revolves about its centre. Temperance in like manner follows the diagonal

<sup>1</sup> Plato, *Protagoras*, 356.

<sup>2</sup> διὸ κατὰ μὲν τὴν οὐσίαν καὶ τὸν λόγον τὸν τί ἦν εἶναι λέγοντα μεσότης ἐστὶν ἡ ἀρετή, κατὰ δὲ τὸ ἀριστον καὶ τὸ εὖ ἀκρότης (*Nicomachean Ethics*, 1107 a). It is a curious instance of Aristotle's candour that he should formulate in one sentence the doctrine of the mean and its opposite without, as far as I can see, saying anything to establish a harmony between them.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* ii. 2, seq.

between an extravagant love of pleasure and a deficient perception of the objects which give pleasure; not an easily conceivable defect, and one rather of an intellectual than a moral character; still one which, if we can conceive it to exist, would deprive temperance of the quality that makes it a virtue. The very idea that lies at the root of goodness for a Christian, or for many who have rejected Christianity—the idea of self-sacrifice—was, except with reference to the larger self found in the State, foreign to the Greek ideal. Equally inconceivable was the absolute condemnation of hatred and malevolence. The Hellenic spirit welcomed all impulse; the only object of its protest was excess. The “art of measurement” was the whole secret of morality.

It would conduce to our understanding of this Greek ideal if we always bore in mind two considerations. One, that what the Greek meant by virtue was something standing in close relation to noble form. The sculptor's art seems unawares the type and model of all that could excite Greek admiration, the beauty of line which a slight swerve to the right or the left would destroy was the outward and visible symbol of all excellence, so that virtue was a more æsthetic ideal, something more like what we should call manliness—perhaps even gentlemanliness—or good taste, than it is with us. And then again it is even more important to remember that Greek virtue was political virtue. Read the account of the last scene in the life of Socrates,<sup>1</sup> see how the best of Greeks parted from his wife and children, and you will measure the divergence between the moral standard of antiquity and of Christendom. There are few scenes in literature more moving than the parting of the teacher from his disciples; it is not strange that the prelude—the cold and hasty dismissal of the mourning

Virtue to a Greek, æsthetic or political rather than individual.

<sup>1</sup> *Phædo*, 116. It will be remembered that Plato was not himself present, but we could hardly in any case dismiss the contemptuous reference of Socrates to “the women” as the mere invention of the recorder.



wife and her infant burden—should be forgotten under its glamour. It is not strange, but it is misleading, and the plea that here we have to do rather with the omissions of Plato than the coldness of his master, would merely provide a different illustration of Greek moral poverty. That tenderness for the weak which average people nowadays either echo in feeling or assume in words was a blank to the hearers of Socrates and the readers of Plato. And the sphere of duty they did recognise was one in which the ideas of balance, of proportion, of measure, are still as necessary and predominant as ever they were. So far as modern Europe refuses to recognise this need, its literature and its whole life is the poorer thereby, and the loss is great.

Greek  
dread of  
Monarchy.

We come upon another aspect of this desire for proportion and measure, as being not only a condition or result of rightness, but rightness itself, in the Greek distrust of personal rule. "Great potentates are mostly bad," says Plato.<sup>1</sup> Monarchy was indeed a hateful institution to the spirit of the whole classic world. To a civilisation facing the despotisms of Asia, and ignorant of the very possibility of constitutional government, monarchy meant the negation of liberty. But in the Greek mind this feeling was intensified and expanded by a consciousness of the dangers of intellectual wealth, and became a vivid shrinking from all personal pre-eminence whatever. The race that is dowered with genius dreads the temptations of genius as it is impossible that average mankind should dread them. The fear lest

"Some new Napoleon should arise",<sup>2</sup>

is not an abiding one in the modern world. But a feeling which may be thus briefly uttered gathers up a large chapter of Greek history. To set up any human being

<sup>1</sup> *Gorgias*, p. 526.

<sup>2</sup> Byron, *Ode to Napoleon Bonaparte*.

at so vast a height above his kind was not only a political danger, it was an offence against the deepest religious feeling of a Greek. The true Divinity of Greek worship was the State, and the State must be invisible. What made the name of a ruler hateful was not that he was cruel or even despotic—Pisistratus was neither—but that he destroyed this central ideal; he, a mortal, took the place of something immortal. Hence the love of liberty involved the reverence for law as no doubt with the best men it does always, but as with ordinary men it does not now. The two Spartans whose history is cited above<sup>1</sup> had made a long and toilsome journey from their own beloved city to confront the king on his throne and suffer his will, but they refused to bow down before him, "for it was not their way to worship men;" and the great king, impressed by the rare spectacle of fearless submission, dismissed them unharmed. Their journey to Susa, and their appearance before Xerxes, express the Greek submission to law combined with the Greek resistance to personal claim. That expedition symbolises no recoil from tyranny as we understand the words;<sup>2</sup> there never was a harsher tyranny than that of Sparta, and it was a tyranny which Sperthias and Bulis would have died to perpetuate. But they would not renounce an opportunity of protest against the claim of a mortal to intercept even the mere symbol of that homage which was the claim of the State.

The bond which made a multitude into a city, the many into one, must be something invisible. The visible monarch was an embodiment not only of impious arrogance, but we might say (if all our associations with the words were not too shallow) of vulgarity and bad taste. The supreme despot was barbaric, lawless, and

The City  
admits no  
mortal re-  
presenta-  
tive.

<sup>1</sup> Page 140.

<sup>2</sup> A Spartan could not sell or give any part of his land; he was not allowed to remain single, to retain a childless wife, or to save the life of his own sickly infant. We should not call a condition thus restricted by the name of Freedom.

in the stress of conflict weak. The supreme law was an inspiring and unconquerable influence, at whose command or in whose defence men were ready to die, and whose claim they would endure any torments rather than transfer to a mortal. Any association of monarchy which seems incompatible with this supremacy of the unseen is wholly superficial. The Homeric kings are not kings in any other sense than that they are the leaders of the armies, and when Ulysses says that the rule of one is necessary,<sup>1</sup> he means only that the rank and file must wait for the word of command. Monarchy was un-Greek, Asiatic, an institution associated with barbarism, and discredited by defeat; the great king leading the might of Asia was ruined by the onset of the populations of a few small towns. Thus in those half-dozen generations which contain all that is most brilliant of Greek poetry and art, monarchy was associated not merely with degrading bondage, but also with degrading failure. The conquest over the seen power is the result of a trust in the unseen; some divine influence appears when human power fails, to give its weight and sanction to the resolute spirit of freedom. The victory of Greece over Persia is the victory of spirit over matter, of will over might. The gods protect the man who spurns mere human dominion. An Unseen Power fights on the side of those who dare to defy all lawless power, and the supreme influences of the world above are in harmony with those which reject all bondage here.

The  
jealousy of  
the Gods

It is necessary to dwell on this thought, because the miracle by which a few Greek towns scattered the might of Asia has not been always worked wherever brave men have been willing to die for their country. Nor, on the other hand, has the rule of the monarch, throughout modern history, and indeed much ancient history, been invariably associated with tyranny; the despotism from which humanity has suffered most is, on the contrary, exactly

<sup>1</sup> *Iliad*, ii. 204.

that which the Greek spirit favoured—the despotism of a class or an order. The conditions which prevailed in the ancient world during the life of Greece were such that both her dread of individual pre-eminence and her confidence in unseen power were justified and enforced by all that is most striking in her history. Nowhere, not even in Judæa, do we find a nation more distinctly marked by Heaven for the part it has to play in the great drama. It is not more true of Greece than of England that a national vocation exists, but the writer who should endeavour to bring out in the history of England any moral purpose, as he cannot help bringing it out in the history of Greece, would lose that intellectual disinterestedness which is the first duty of an historian; his narrative would be submerged in argument. But it is hardly possible to narrate the history of Greece without assuming that it has a lesson for the world. In merely setting forth the facts of Greek history we must speak of the triumph of the resolute few, the downfall of the barbaric many, the vindication of the spirit of liberty. What the reader longs to discover in all history is written in the tale of Salamis and Thermopylæ, so that he who runs may read. As we follow the defeat of arrogant might on the page of Herodotus, we are tempted to quote “He hath put down the mighty from their seat”; and if we cannot conclude “He hath exalted the humble and meek,” at least those who were exalted had a religious dread of arrogance. Here as so often we make Greek feeling too moral. The “jealousy of the gods” is known as much through the protest of Plato as through the continued assertion of Herodotus; the words have no real relation to the assertion, “I the Lord thy God am a jealous God.” The Hebrew jealousy is that of a spouse; the Greek jealousy is that of a rival. The Divine displeasure is attracted not only by presumption or intemperance, but by a mere excess of prosperity;<sup>1</sup> the

<sup>1</sup> See the story of Polykrates; Herodotus, iii. 40.

divinities wish to keep unmingled good fortune to themselves, as a privilege of their order. The prosperous man who fails to propitiate them by sacrifice of a cherished possession is doomed by them to a fearful death; Polycrates dies a victim to their grudge, not to their justice. The sentiments thus attributed to the gods were indeed, as a Greek poet has said,<sup>1</sup> shameful among ordinary men. But see again how subtly evil, in the Greek ideal, melts into good. The envy of the gods from a slightly shifted point of view becomes their compassion. The feeling to which we may give either of these names, on one side so ignoble, on the other so pure and elevating, has its justification and expression in all that is grandest in Greek history, and brings that history near to being an exhibition of the justice of the power which rules the world.

seems akin  
to their  
compas-  
sion.

That mystic connection between a reverent awe for what is high and a generous compassion for what is lowly which is implied in our twofold rendering of *pietas* as *piety* and *pity*<sup>2</sup> seems continually indicated by the expressions of Herodotus. The shipwreck of Asia on the rock of Greek freedom does not appear to a modern reader an illustration of that theme; he is already too familiar with the issue. But if we had been present at the conflict and watched the result, we might have felt, as Herodotus did, that God had rebuked the insolence of the proud, and taken part with the weak. The wise Persian who endeavours to turn Xerxes from the expedition that is to end in his ruin<sup>3</sup> uses almost the words cited above from a psalm, and though, no doubt, he is chiefly a creation of Greek imagination, he is none the less a figure of historic significance on the canvas of Herodotus. The historian shows us how that great event looked to those who were to pass on its influence to the modern world—a repre-

<sup>1</sup> Xenophanes, quoted above, p. 155.

<sup>2</sup> It should be translated *pity*; for instance, in the indignant exclamation of Priam, Virgil, *Æn.* ii. 536.

<sup>3</sup> Herodotus, vii. 10, 5.



sentation which, even if it be conveyed through fiction, possesses the highest kind of historic truth. Some of the forms in which Herodotus expresses this feeling must be allowed to have even more than this kind of authenticity. When he represents Greek envoys from the army at Thermopylæ striving to encourage allies<sup>1</sup> with the reminder that "the invader is not a god but a man, and that there never had been and never would be a man who was not liable to misfortunes greater in proportion to his own greatness"; when he paints a victorious general dissuading the army from pursuit of the defeated host with the reminder that<sup>2</sup> "we have not achieved this victory by our own might, it is the work of gods and heroes who were jealous that one man should be king at once over Greece and Asia"—we may doubt whether these are the actual expressions used by his *dramatis personæ*, but can hardly suppose that in professing to cite words so memorable, so recent, and so public, he would make any very important mistake. The sense of a constant nearness of disappointment to hope, of a hidden irony in the adjustment of anticipation and effort to result, is not ordinarily or necessarily a moral feeling; sometimes it is an immoral feeling. But it belongs to that frontier region of human thought where a step sets us on a different kingdom; and it sometimes seems as if the same words, with a different emphasis, might belong to either realm. Without entertaining for a moment the illusion which brings in a touch of Hebrew feeling, it is difficult to appreciate the Greek feeling which gives epic unity to what we may call the prose Iliad of Greece. Herodotus tells<sup>3</sup> of a spectator watching the mighty host passing the Hellespont, who expresses his wonder why Jove, in the likeness of a Persian, has led the whole race of men for the destruction of Greece; and the subsequent defeat is prefaced and preluded by the presumption which these words reflected. And yet even in the full flush of that presumption Xerxes sheds tears which

<sup>1</sup> Herodotus, vii. 203.<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* viii. 109.<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* vii. 56

he explains by the transitoriness of human life, but in which we cannot but discover some dim, wide-reaching sense of compassion. "Short as our time here is," answers the Persian prince to the lament of Xerxes,<sup>1</sup> "there is no man who is so fortunate as not to have felt the wish for death, not once but many times." Is there not in these words a touch of sympathy (of course rather in the mind of the historian than in that of the supposed speaker) with the dumb multitudes just reviewed by the great king, driven on under the lash to a doom certain enough for many of them, even should the presumptuous hopes of their monarch be fulfilled?

The Teaching of Adversity.

Such a feeling seems always heard as a tremulous undertone through the cheerful, light-hearted strain of the narrative; everywhere we hear the sigh of suffering mingle with the note of triumph. And sometimes it seems that the dispensation which takes the aspect of divine grudge of mortal bliss might, it seems, from a higher point of view, be discerned as the result of a divine love anxious not to keep but to share the true blessedness. Cræsus,<sup>2</sup> a vainglorious ruler on the throne, becomes a philosopher and almost a saint in exile. He listens to the words of Solon with indifference, he remembers them with an emotion which moves the admiration of his conqueror and saves his life. He emerges from the hours of anguish on the burning pyre to which he has been condemned and from which he has been rescued by Cyrus a changed being, we might say it is the scene of his conversion. It is indeed the religion of Greece to which he is converted, the dread of arrogance, the reverence for measure and proportion. The great king discerns in him a teacher for his son, and bequeaths to him the task of guiding and warning Cambyzes, a task which he fulfils almost at the cost of his life.<sup>3</sup> So wonderfully different is the philosophic from the royal Cræsus, the sage who ventures to withstand the tyrant in defence of his help-

<sup>1</sup> Herodotus, vii. 45, 46.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* i. 86.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* i. 208, iii. 36.

less victims from the king who has nothing to say to Solon but to brag of his riches, that the reader forgets the identity of the two persons, and loses the sermon on the teaching of adversity by the very completeness of its illustration. Christian interpretation, seeing the Greek horror of arrogance in the shadow of the Cross, infuses a foreign element into this teaching; but we hold a clue to its meaning when we recognise that this misinterpretation is almost inevitable. "Zeus himself," pleads the son of Œdipus at Colonus, "hath Mercy for the sharer of his throne."<sup>1</sup> The reader remembers Portia's almost equivalent, "The quality of mercy is mightiest in the mighty." We are not reminded that between the verse of Sophocles and Shakespeare comes the utterance of one who bade his hearers be merciful as their Father in Heaven is merciful; both dramas here recall the words of Christ, but the resemblance is greatest where it is impossible that it should be conscious. In both, what moulds the thought is creative art rather than holy aspiration; the Theban prince pleads for himself; the Venetian lady demands mercy only for one of her own race and faith, and has none for the Jew. Probably it has happened only once in the world's history that mercy was enjoined on the heart and conscience by one who in the hour of need never sought it for himself. Man, for the most part, learns the blessedness of giving through the need of receiving; and thus the perfect artist cannot but preach virtue when all he desires is to paint the life of humanity, with its burden of toil, of difficulty, and of sorrow.

"The universe," says one of the earliest thinkers of Greece,<sup>2</sup> "is the harmony of the lyre and the bow." The order of Nature, in its widest sense, Heraclitus thought, rests on the harmony of all that the lyre symbolises, and all

Nearness  
of Joy to  
Sorrow.

<sup>1</sup> *Œdus* is thus translated by Sir Richard Jebb (*Sophocles, Ed. Col.*, 1268, 1269).

<sup>2</sup> i.e. Heraclitus. See *Die Philosophie Herakleitos des Dunklen*, von Ferdinand Lassalle. The fragments which follow are taken from this work.

that the bow symbolises; on the union of the spirit which gives to life all its value, with the power that destroys life. "The hidden harmony is better than that which is manifest;" with the element of discord we should lose the finest music of humanity. "It is not well that man should choose his fate." One might fancy the last sentence an utterance from the cloister; it seems a strange expression from one of the joy-loving, art-loving Greek race. Yet, in truth, it is one of the most characteristic that have come down to us in the Greek tongue. It represents a large part of what is most impressive in Greek literature. It would be hardly possible to gather so many illustrations of the belief in the blessings of adversity from any other historian as from Herodotus. The story of Cræsus at its opening sets the keynote, and Polycrates supplies the best known illustration of the theme; but perhaps nothing is so impressive as the decision of Solon, so offensive to Cræsus,<sup>1</sup> that the second place in human happiness is to be given to the two Argive youths who drew their mother to the temple of Juno in place of the oxen, and after her prayer to the goddess to grant them that which is best for man, fell asleep in the holy precincts, and awoke no more. What! one is tempted to ask, is the earthly doom of humanity one prolonged mistake? Is it better to quit this scene of existence as soon as it is fully open? The spirit which seems to answer "Yes" is the spirit which most delights in all the beauty, the pleasure, the joy of earth. The power to see its charm seems but the other side of the power to see its emptiness. "Man is the dream of a shade,"<sup>2</sup> says the poet who has immortalised the games of Greece. The sense of life's brightness and the sense of its vanity seemed to have attained their summit together. We have all known moments in which we could understand the conjunction, moments in which the crash of dance music or the brightness of a summer's day seemed to hold some profound, unspeakable melancholy. The feeling is often found in the

<sup>1</sup> Herodotus, i. 31.

<sup>2</sup> Pindar, *Pyth.*, viii. 95.



poetry of Scott, and lends it a peculiar Greek grace. In Greek poetry we meet ideas to which we are accustomed as current coin fresh from the mint of human thought—that sentiment of the fleetingness in all things earthly, which with us, from its very depth and breadth, has become trite, inspired, the grandest poetry of Greece, and is to be found in its loftiest prose, even when its aim is a record of memorable action and immortal fame.

This moral pulsation of Greek feeling is most clearly exhibited in those immortal creations which have made

Tragedy,  
the conflict  
of Will and  
Destiny.

“The tale of Thebes and Pelops’ line”

no exclusive possession of the Attic stage, but the inheritance of humanity. In all Tragedy (taking that word in its broadest sense) there must be antagonism between two elements, that idea which we recognise best under its antique garb of Destiny, a strictly non-moral element; and on the other, that core of character which we know as Will. We have further imported into our modern conception of the word the assumption that the first of these antagonists must prevail, that Will must suffer defeat. Of course that is a consequence of any logical view of Destiny. If it is that which is certain to happen it must be always the victor; and the unhappy issue which we suppose essential to tragedy does generally, not always, conclude Greek tragedies. But we need only turn to the Greek form of prophecy to see that the ancient view of Destiny was not logical. No one would ever have consulted an oracle if he had believed that Destiny could not be influenced by human endeavour, and it is difficult, under these circumstances, to say exactly what Destiny means. Still it is not impossible to enter into sympathy with a point of view whence it appeared as something real yet not absolute, to conceive of it for the moment as the will of a superhuman ruler, mighty but not almighty, against which, as against any other despotism,



it was not impossible that resolute human will should prevail. We must further conceive of this superhuman despotism as supreme over the Divine as well as human world, for Zeus himself is subject to its law, a conception which appears to lower and confuse all coherent ideas of what is Divine. We must, in fact, make room for the interference of extra logical or even illogical ideas, and be ready to concede that here we are dealing with things so vast and mysterious as to include the possibility that one of them may be true, and what looks to us its contrary not false. We make some such concessions now when we speak of the will of the Almighty; we must add others when we come to consider the Greek belief in Fate—others less deep-seated (for indeed none can pierce to the depth of the former) but perhaps more striking and obvious.

The  
mystery of  
Will.

Nor do we escape all similar inconsistency when we turn to the other element of Tragedy, and seek to define what we mean by Will, as distinct from Desire. We suggest a tenable belief when we say it is the desire which a man chooses, and not that which chooses him. When he ends the strife of warring wishes and pronounces from the judgment seat the fiat of distinct volition, he knows that something speaks in him which has not spoken hitherto, something which lies at the root of his being, which makes him a Self. Yet we must acknowledge, though it is often forgotten, that Will does not cover the whole ground of moral difference; evil passions are evil whether the Will consents to them or not, and goodness is never so perfect as when it is involuntary. We must accept mystery in both elements of the problem, we must be content to suggest questions we cannot answer. We can only say that in the strife between two things neither of which we can define with impeccable logical clearness, is to be found the core of life's battle. Tragedy disappears whenever one of these elements is lacking. We should never apply the word to a story of helpless

suffering, there must be always conflict between the individual Will and that course of events which seems to express some larger Will, yet not so much larger that conflict is inconceivable. If we call *Paradise Lost* tragic it is because we forget, and the poet forgets, that we are dealing with Omnipotence. Nothing must be absolute in Tragedy. It is a struggle between two powers who *can* struggle; for the moment we must contemplate possible victory for either. The words explain the fact that Tragedy is the creation of Athens, that immortal representative of delight in freedom, of hatred to tyrants, of hatred even to men who were not tyrants in the modern sense. Greek tragedy is this yearning for freedom glowing in the shadow of an awful Fate, it is the horror of bondage transferred to moral ground, the problem of the innocent tangled in the inheritance of guilt, and in rare moments of which in the sense of their significance we perhaps exaggerate the frequency, the glimmering hint of a higher hope worked out through the struggle.

The problem is perennial, but its form changes from age to age. One element indeed is constant. Will means the same thing at all times. But Destiny is a very different conception at different periods and for different races. It is one of many cases in which Science has become the heir of Theology. Destiny has thus in our day taken a new form, and is known as the law of heredity. It was known to a former day as vicarious guilt or original sin, but in some form it is present everywhere. Suffering, we find, follows wrongdoing, but not necessarily the wrongdoer, and the dislocation of the sin and the punishment is a perplexity to the moral sense at all times. But not equally to the moral sense at all times. For the spirit which refuses to take account of the claim of the individual—the spirit to which Man the Individual is a mere fragment—the fact of corporate responsibility loses much of its perplexity. The guilt of

The problem of Destiny in its various forms.

a race, of a nation, of a family, is from such a point of view real guilt. On the whole this was the view of antiquity, but the deeper mind of every age must discern an opposite truth—nay, what appears a contrary truth. “What mean ye that ye have used this proverb . . . ‘The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge?’”<sup>1</sup> asks the prophet of his captive brethren in Babylon. The very form of the proverb implies a protest against the law it recognises. But it is a law that all must recognise. However it be harmonised with Divine justice or human responsibility the idea of a corporate liability to the consequences of guilt can be rejected only by one who refuses to look with eyes free from prejudice at the life of the world or of that of any individual. The text may be remembered as the theme of Greek tragedy. But what to the Hebrew seer was an agonising perplexity took to the Hellenic poet the aspect of an interesting problem. Where the Hebrew spirit sought its God almost with the cry of an orphan, the Hellenic spirit recognised its primal ideas in their clear and forcible antagonism, and watched their conflict as some gymnasium where all spiritual power was to be most highly developed. True, the fathers had eaten sour grapes—true, the children’s teeth were set on edge; but in the rich garden of humanity were many fruits, and of none was it said to the inhabitants of the garden—‘Thou mayst not eat of the tree which bears it. All experience was fruit—all was seed. To the Greek spirit, none was poison.

Contrast of  
ancient and  
modern  
tragedy

Thus it was that all the satisfaction supplied to a modern audience by delineation of various character and an exciting plot was found by the Greek in a harmony of two opposite ideas: Man the fragment, and Man the type of Unity. It seems an absurd paradox to say that immortal specimens of drama are not dramatic, and yet if any one wants to enjoy

<sup>1</sup> Ezekiel xviii, 2.

them he must begin by recognising something that may be expressed in those words. Much that is necessary to make a play interesting to a modern audience was, we may say, deliberately avoided by the Greek tragedians. At all events they had, in the earliest Greek poetry, a vivid pattern of this kind of interest before their eyes, and refused to carry it on. In the epics there is as much play of character and variety of incident as in a modern drama. Homer is almost as dramatic as Shakespeare. But Æschylus is hardly more dramatic than Milton—dramatic, that is, in the sense demanded by modern associations. The Greek dramatists seem to avoid exciting surprise or bringing in variety, as carefully as an English playwright would make it his aim to provide his audience with both. What they sought was to revive familiar images and enforce accepted lessons, to wed the majesty of Thought to the impressiveness of Action, and to exclude everything which might impair the solemnity and sobriety of the union. When we turn from Æschylus, and even from Sophocles, to Shakespeare, we exchange a granite peak for a woodland path. There no foliage softens the outlines, no flower invites delay; here the foreground is the chief object of interest, the far vistas are rare. In the theatre of Dionysius we are alone with great ideas and profound emotions. That mighty parallax by which conscience glimmers on human vision from the side alternately of Hell and of Heaven is represented with an impressive concentration, leaving little room for various delineation of character and life. What modern taste urgently demands—the element of surprise—is rigidly excluded; the Greek dramatist reveals almost at once what the modern dramatist would conceal till the last moment, and the reader feels impatience with the blindness of the persons to explanations he has seen all along. Nothing must distract the attention of the Greek spectator from a few great and simple ideas. For the public to which an exhibition of so solemn and philosophic a character was



recreation these great ideas and simple emotions must have meant more than they do to us. They meant much more and much less. The interest which a modern audience draws from an exciting plot or a vivid delineation of character they could discover in a moral problem. The question of human responsibility was as interesting to them as a love story is to us; but it was interesting in the same way, as a part of life, an important element in the development of human aims, not as a keynote with which the whole strain must be brought into harmony. We even find that what we should consider a somewhat vulgar taste helped to stimulate their attention. The Athenians loved the wrangle of the law courts,<sup>1</sup> they welcomed any echo from it in the council of the gods; they were not protected from this ignoble form of the desire to know the other side of the question by any sense of the importance of morality and the supreme difference of right and wrong. Morality was one of their numerous interests, not the authoritative regulator of all.

as shown in  
*Macbeth*  
and the  
Oresteian  
trilogy.

We are as little in harmony with this antique conception of drama in its moral as in its literary aspect. We do not want the mirror held up to Nature in the sense that it shall reproduce the oscillation of claim forced on us alike by memory and history. It is enough, and too much, to be always discovering in real life that "black's not so very black, nor white so very white," to find a Tiberius excusable, a St. Louis unjust. What we ask of fiction is that it should deliver us from this arduous bondage to honesty and justice into a realm of frank partisanship, permitting us unmitigated satisfaction in the victory of one side, the defeat of another. To attain this result the great master of modern drama has falsified history.<sup>2</sup> *Macbeth* and

<sup>1</sup> The whole of *The Wasps* of Aristophanes seems to me to lose a good deal of its point for an English reader on account of our difficulty in sympathising with such a passion.

<sup>2</sup> The contrast to Greek feeling is the more striking because *Macbeth* is a play distinctly Greek in form.



Duncan, as far as we know them from Holinshed, were contrasted merely as conqueror and conquered; as far as we know them from Shakespeare they are contrasted as a villain and a saint. The midnight assassination was in fact a victory in the field, the storm of tyranny was in fact ten years of just and firm rule. It is the poet, and not his hero, who has murdered an excellent King of Scotland. The play insists in every scene that the death of Duncan was the crime of Macbeth and his wife; it was a treacherous murder motivated by ambition, and followed by memories which empty all material splendour and authority of enjoyment, turning the royal robes to a Nessus shirt, and making the victim of crime an object of envy to the criminal.<sup>1</sup>

"Duncan is in his grave;  
After life's fitful fever he sleeps well."

The words may be taken as a mere expression of longing for escape from the disquieting apprehensions of the usurper, but we cannot so interpret Macbeth's question to the physician—

"Canst thou not minister to a mind diseased;  
Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow;  
And with some sweet oblivious antidote  
Cleanse the stuffed bosom of that perilous stuff  
Which weighs upon the heart?"

Here we have a feeling different from anything in Greek drama. The Greek Lady Macbeth — so we may entitle Clytemnestra — knows of no "rooted sorrow." She asks nothing but security. There is not a touch in the play to show that she has a moment's feeling of self-reproach for the murder of Agamemnon. "All the spices of Araby would not sweeten this little hand" is an exclamation that finds no echo with her. To the last, as far as appears,

<sup>1</sup> "The tragedy," says a recent Shakespearian critic, "is even a little marred by the *fabula doctæ*, the constant insinuation that 'such is the consequence of grasping at power by the aid of crime'" (*William Shakespeare, a Critical Study*, by George Brandes, translation from the Danish, ii. 106).

she remains happy with Ægisthus and glad to be rid of her husband. The tragedy never suggests the idea of remorse. Shakespeare had a case where he might have argued for and against the criminals and taken part with each alternately, as the Greek genius insists that we shall always do. And he will have none of this; he blackens the shadows on one side, on the other he damps them away. As he recedes from history he recedes also from the ideal of the people who created drama, and who kept through all their rich and varied interest the continual readiness for the other side which belongs to their vivid imagination, their forensic alertness, and their cool morality.

Æschylus  
and the  
freedom of  
Greece.

It is perhaps an illustration of this spirit of rhythmic balance that while Æschylus, the first great author of Tragedy in Greece and in the world, is generally called the poet of Fate, it is rather his delineation of Will which strikes the present writer as his true characteristic. In his creations both ideas so closely approach that limit whence they diverge that a slight movement of thought seems to change his position with regard to either. Of all great poets he most explains, and is explained by, the events of his age. He lived when a vast empire, such as might well appear an expression and type of Destiny, engulfed like a rising tide the outposts of the Hellenic world, when it was repulsed on Greek soil by an army so small in face of those myriads as to take almost a spiritual aspect and stand for all time as a typical embodiment of resolute Will. He was both an actor and an author in the great drama. In the last character he stands alone. In the first he was doubtless equalled by thousands of his countrymen, yet it was the first achievement which he wished to be remembered, rather than that known to the readers of every age. The great caricaturist whose fame rivals his own brings him upon the stage<sup>1</sup> to declare<sup>2</sup> that his martial strains have

<sup>1</sup> Aristophanes, *Frogs*, 1021 seq.

<sup>2</sup> See Plutarch, *Symp.* vii. 10.

breathed into his countrymen the spirit of battle, inspiring them with that dauntless courage which every citizen of Athens would feel, at that epoch, his one need. And we have seen with what triumphant and yet merciful strains he celebrates the victory of Athens. But Æschylus himself desired to appear to posterity not as the singer but as the soldier of Athens in her stand against Asia. His Epitaph, believed to be composed by himself, says nothing of the works to which his name owes its immortality, but states

"How tried his valour Marathon may tell,  
And long-haired Medes who knew it all too well."<sup>1</sup>

To that proud self-celebration he was well entitled; he was one of those, among a band occupying the first range of the world's heroes, who were selected for the special commendation of his contemporaries; he with his two brothers were chosen for the prize of pre-eminent bravery in a contest where all are pre-eminent in the world's regard, and it is by a natural fitness that we find in the production of his pen the idea which he upheld and illustrated by his sword. The period which coincided with his maturity (he was thirty-six at the battle of Marathon) was such an exhibition of the explosive power that lies in the idea of freedom as the world has not seen again. Hence the first great dramatic poet expresses the triumph of Will over what might seem Destiny as none of his successors could express it again. The Greek struggle with Persia is an antagonism as yet unparalleled in the history of the world. The Armada, perhaps, was a crisis nearly as keen for England as Marathon for Greece. But Shakespeare could not commemorate the triumph of England as Æschylus commemorated the triumph of Greece. No nation of modern Europe could embody the cause of freedom against slavery, culture against barbarism, growing

<sup>1</sup> See also Pausanias, i. 14, § 5.

life against materialistic power as Greece embodied it. And of this colossal struggle Æschylus must always remain the interpreter.

Æschylus  
and the  
idea of  
Will.

He is its interpreter not only in the sense that it is actually commemorated in his verse, and that the poetic record must be the most impressive, but also in the sense that he transfers this idea of unconquerable Will to moral ground, and exhibits the grandeur of a resolute independence when matched even against supreme supernatural power. Prometheus, the protector of humanity, defying the wrath of Zeus from the rock to which he is chained for ages, might seem a symbol of Greece in the event of Persian victory. He is one of the great primal creations of genius, and as such, we may say, greater than his creator, for in all the work of genius there is an element which seems to come rather through than from the mind of man. The idea there embodied has come home to different generations under different aspects; with some of them, perhaps, the poet would have had but little sympathy. He is a sower of seed, the harvest is for a remote posterity long succeeding his own, and for many hardly knowing anything of him but his name. But for all, the idea of a dauntless spirit matched against overwhelming force remains, the spirit that force can torture but not bend, the spirit against which Zeus himself exerts his might in vain. The idea of Freedom is set by Æschylus on a height above all subsequent approach, for never again did it appear in proximity to an abyss so profound.

Æschylus  
and the  
idea of  
Guilt.

We have said that Æschylus exhibits the two sides of the tragic antithesis with *almost* equal power. Nothing can quite equal in impressiveness the picture of Prometheus defying the wrath of Zeus; while the triumph of Athens over the great king, as we have seen, owes its grandeur to the same idea of resolute Will daring to defy, and enabled to defeat, overwhelming Force. It is true that the better known works of Æschylus take up the other side of the vast

conflict: the Trilogy generally remembered in association with his name (already touched on), the story of Agamemnon, of Clytemnestra, of Orestes—exhibits the irresistible march of Destiny. And in any attempt to focus attention on the predominant characteristic of the three great Attic tragedians we must remember that the three great ideas of Tragedy Will, Destiny, Desire—are present in all, varying only in their proportions. “Pelops’ line” is stained with guilt from our first acquaintance with it, while his individual descendants are so far innocent that there seems as much to say for as against each of them. The threefold drama of Æschylus tells how Agamemnon, the most illustrious descendant of Pelops, was on his return from the taking of Troy murdered by his wife in adulterous league with her cousin Ægisthus. But Clytemnestra is not only a faithless wife, she is a bereaved mother: her daughter has been torn from her and sacrificed on the altar of ambition; and as we follow her indignant lament<sup>1</sup> we feel that she has endured grievous wrong. Even Ægisthus, the person in the play with whom we are apparently meant least to sympathise, appeals to us as he dwells on the wrongs of his father Thyestes,<sup>2</sup> invited by Atreus to the horrid banquet where unawares he tasted the flesh of his murdered children, a deed which in its turn was also one of revenge. When we look forward instead of backwards, and pursue the stream of crime which carries on Orestes to avenge his father, as Clytemnestra had avenged her daughter, our sympathies hesitate between the mother of Iphigenia and the son of Agamemnon, and where modern approval hesitates, Greek sympathy moves with rapid impulse, alternately approaching and receding from either side, but identifying itself with neither.

<sup>1</sup> *Agamemnon*, 1417-1418, 1432. Note also the choral ode, 206 *seq.*, which prepares an excuse for Clytemnestra from those who are afterwards most severely to condemn her.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* 1583.



Sophocles  
and the  
idea of  
Destiny.

Thus even when Æschylus appears as the poet of Destiny, it is Destiny not so much in antagonism to as in alliance with the idea of human Will; a stream which comes, like a Highland river, coloured by the material through which it flows, and thus half disguised. We do not gain the full vision of the awful Power till we see it in clear separateness from human volition, and to make that discovery we must await the successor of Æschylus. With Sophocles the rhythmic movement of Greek thought passes from the idea of Will to that of Destiny in its completeness, and as we watch the transition we can in the younger as the elder poet fit either to the background of history. Sophocles was young enough to be the son of Æschylus,<sup>1</sup> and as we remember that Æschylus fought at Marathon so we should remember that Sophocles was chosen at the age of sixteen to lead the solemn dance in honour of the victory of Salamis. The terror, the anguish preceding the victory associated with that boyish triumph could be to Sophocles little but a vivid dream, the triumph of Greece was the reality, his genius drew its sap from that soil. Hence in the swift pulsation of Greek genius, imagination passed to the other side. From Sophocles we have examples of the futility of man's choice against heaven's decree. Dejanaira,<sup>2</sup> destroying the beloved in an innocent endeavour to regain the love; Antigone wasting her devotion on a corpse; Œdipus, the blameless Prince, enmeshed in a hideous destiny by his very efforts to avoid it—all these figures of Sophoclean drama illustrate the influence of some power which seems to mock and scorn human Will. We cannot but connect this influence with that disastrous war which arrested Greece on the threshold

<sup>1</sup> Sophocles lived from 495 to 406 B.C.

<sup>2</sup> The *Trachiniae*, the most pathetic play of a master of pathos. It has been supposed to show the influence of Euripides (quite possible chronologically), and seems to me to express all the sympathy with suffering characteristic of the younger poet, while free from his sympathy with vindictiveness and perfidy. The expression of pity from Dejanaira for the captives of Heracles shows the high-water mark of Greek feeling against slavery.

of her nationality and left her,<sup>1</sup> a chaos of warring cities, at the feet of triumphant Macedon. As we recognise in the first great dramatist of Greece an exponent of the spirit of an awakening nation, the emergence into art of that spirit which almost emerged into history as a united Hellas, so we may recognise in the second corresponding representative of that spirit of division—that baleful fate which baffled the convergent impulses of a race, and closed the golden gates for ever.

If Æschylus embodies that passion for freedom which triumphed in the Persian war, and Sophocles that recognition of fate which we may imagine the intellectual refuge of all who lived through the Peloponnesian, then Euripides might represent the epoch of desultory struggle which ensued, and ended in the defeat of Chæroneia. Euripides died one year before Sophocles, but he represents a later age; he is always reckoned as in comparison a modern. That world of individual emotion which we find at its height in Shakespeare dawns with him. When the conception of man as the fragment of a larger whole was lost in the idea of a complete personality, a new phase of moral evolution, belonging properly to the modern world, took its start.<sup>2</sup> Euripides lived when Will had lost its stimulus, yielding the place to that spirit of desire, its seeming kinsman, which is in truth its deadliest foe. His Phædra, consumed by a passion she can neither renounce nor obey, may be taken as a type of his native city, when Athens was torn between the ideal of a united nation and an autonomous city-state. For the age to which Euripides belonged was one in which the city-state was called on to merge her independence in the larger development of her

With  
Euripides,  
Will fades  
into desire.

<sup>1</sup> The latest probable date given by Sir Richard Jebb for the *Trachiniae* —416 B.C. —is that of the taking of Melos. If we might stretch the allowance so as to include that event, it would be a vivid commentary upon a national crime, and in any case expresses what must have been the emotions of a few noble Athenians during the war at the frequent sight of slaves brought to their city by massacre.

<sup>2</sup> Euripides lived from 480 B.C. to 406, so that his life would coincide with the progress of Athens from her zenith to her nadir.

race, and cease from rivalries which seemed inseparable from her existence. That spirit of development which man has power to resist and retard, but not to overcome, claimed of Athens, of Sparta, of Thebes, that they should become portions of a united Hellas.<sup>1</sup> They would not hear the call, they clung to a separateness that had become illegitimate, and they exchanged their prized independence not, as was surely possible, for membership in a nation, but for subordination in an empire. The orators and statesmen of Greece in the fourth century before our era looked for a national career to which Greece first awoke more than two millenniums later; and we stand as yet too near that awakening to pronounce on the possibilities of a race which so long defers its majority. When we enter on such speculations we make use of a paradox; to conceive what might have happened is, at certain crises, a preliminary to understanding what did happen. Such a crisis was that which ushered in the empire of Alexander, which might, so we will allow ourselves to dream, have ushered in the empire of Greece.

“Our Euripides the human” gives a voice to the sorrows of frail, disappointed humanity, especially of its weaker half, which endears him to the heart of our own time; the very specimen from the *Hippolytus* chosen above<sup>2</sup> proclaims with a force hardly to be increased by added illustration his power to move our sympathies in harmony with bitter and unheroic woes. This vivid individuality does not of itself exclude the idea of Fate, we find it in Sophocles. But we discern the antithesis more clearly in the elder poets, and will give what remains of our space to an analysis of the work in which Sophocles has set forth the contrast of Will and Destiny with sculpturesque distinctness and imaginative glow.

<sup>1</sup> “For a Greek city willingly to surrender its full and distinct sovereignty,” says Freeman (*History of Federal Government*, pp. 364–365), “was a thing of which earlier times,” i.e. than those of Aratus, “presented only one recorded specimen, the amalgamation of Corinth and Argos in 393 B.C.” See also Xen. *Hell.* iv. 4, 6.

<sup>2</sup> See above, p. 148.

The typical instance, and we may say the incarnation of this Greek spirit of reversible sympathy, is to be found in that group of deities known to the ordinary reader under their English name of the Furies. It is a name expressing less than half their agency, but abhorrence is a more vivid feeling than sympathy, and in the rhythmic swing between them which makes up Greek dramatic feeling, we, following the prosaic Roman spirit,<sup>1</sup> have remembered what is most obtrusive, not what is most permanent. In the only Greek play which brings these divinities actually on the stage the contrast which they typify is expressed in its sharpest antagonism, for while they are described as hateful beings, inspiring horror by their mere appearance, their title, as given in that of the play, is the kindly or gracious ones. It is often said that the name belongs to the category of flattering titles applied by prudent persons to formidable divinities, or even, as in the case of the Euxine, to dangerous things, the stormy being flattered as "the hospitable" sea. Still it remains true that, in the conception of Æschylus, the first of these explanations is no less applicable than the other, and perhaps they need not always be rigidly distinguished. The Furies—the kindly or gracious Ones! There is the same object—the moral Law, or in its subjective form we may say the Conscience—according as we approach it from the side of the sinner, or of that Law which the sinner has transgressed. In our change of moral parallax we find it flash upon us from Heaven or from Hell. To understand the Greek attitude we must give these two sides an equivalence which modern feeling finds it hard to accept. We must banish the idea of a moral interest as supreme; we must accept it as one claimant among many for a place in

Alternate  
aspects of  
Conscience.

<sup>1</sup> Æschylus, *Eumen.*, 881 seq. Is it not possible that the reason why modern associations with these deities belong so exclusively to their malignant aspect may be the failure of the dull Roman intelligence to grasp this antithesis? The mention in Latin authors shows that they were to the Roman merely "the Furies"; and when Pausanias visited Athens about A.D. 170, he seems to have been surprised to have found nothing horrible in the representation of them.

the council chamber of human impulse. To make it this, it may be said, is to do away with the very idea of the Conscience. It is supreme or nothing. True, and yet the shadow cast from the idea on the luminous atmosphere of Greek thought has a vivid impressiveness. Perhaps we should err equally in making these divinities mean the Conscience, and depriving them of all associations with the Conscience. The ideas and beliefs which we sum up under the name were Greek ideas and beliefs only so far as we drain away from their common claim that association of supremacy apart from which the word *ought* loses its meaning, but it would be a mistake to think that with this process we empty the idea of evil of all significance. Neither side of this dualism is weakened by the nearness of its opposite. The tepid sympathy which strikes off something from the claims of both sides is quite unlike that flash of alternate attention which, for the moment, plunges into an exclusive understanding of either. "To put oneself in the position of hearing all that has to be said for a particular case is to think that side in the right," a barrister urged, in defending his profession. He went on to argue that the law which made provision for this exclusive attention to either side did all within human power to secure justice for both. This is the attitude of Greece towards all sides of human feeling, and it comes out especially in its delineation of the power representing a righteous abhorrence of wrong. The so-called Furies might from some points of view be called the Greek equivalent of Ahriman. They are daughters of night; they enter into conflict with the God of Day,<sup>1</sup> who shelters from them the object of their pursuit, banishes them from his temple with fierce invective, and forces them to surrender their victim to his protection. Their struggle with Apollo, the protector of Orestes, is the nearest approach to the Persian symbolism of a struggle of light and darkness that we can discover

<sup>1</sup> Æsch., *Eumenides*, 321.



throughout the Greek mythology—on the one hand the radiant Sun-god, in all his majesty and beauty: on the other these daughters of night, odious in aspect and pitiless in pursuit of the haunted being to whom he extends a merciful and soothing care. We are reminded of Satan by them more than by any other representation known to classic thought; sometimes even of the vulgar Satan with his horns and hoofs,<sup>1</sup> for their haunting presence is the worst torment they can inflict on the victim. They take the same place as Satan does when he comes among the sons of God to bear witness against Job. But Greek thought, unlike Jewish, gives the accuser a permanent place in Heaven; and passing lightly over that boundary line of good and evil which never had much significance for it, sees them as types not of the resentment and hatred which perpetuate the wrong they would avenge, but as that witness of wrong within which is also the witness of right. Athene, not here, as in the *Iliad*, the instigator of perfidy, but the spirit which sees both sides, appears upon the scene as arbitrator between the Furies and Orestes, and the play ends with their reconciliation. The Goddess of Wisdom induces the pitiless beings to take up their abode with those who have dared to shelter their victim from them. The Furies become the Gracious Ones,<sup>2</sup> and in the city they had entered as deadly enemies they remain as beneficial guardians, attired in "the Godhead's most benignant grace."

They do not appear again as actual figures on the stage throughout the course of Greek drama, so far as we know it. But both the second and third of the great tragic trio give them a place among the agencies, real or imagined, which rule human fate. Sophocles paints the healing influence of their benediction; he represents, we may say, the august and solemn acquittal of the moral judge; he shows the Furies as reconciled to Apollo, the young god whom they had denounced as a usurper, and in response to his

Benignant  
influence

<sup>1</sup> *Æsch.*, *Eumenides*, 46-59.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, last scene.

appeal extending their protection to the woe-worn wanderer Ædipus. And then again Euripides, the modern, returns to the earlier theme in the spirit, we might almost say, of the eighteenth century; he shows Orestes<sup>1</sup> haunted by the nightmare horrors of the murderer, and sublimates the awful deities into mere emotions of the disordered brain and agitated heart. On his page they are as much mere symbols of emotion as on that of a modern poet; they have faded into ghastly dreams, exhibiting both the vivid moral imagination and the small moral intensity of the Greek ideal. Let us dwell on the intermediate presentation of these mystic beings, that given by Sophocles, and follow the development which, taking a new human hero, recalls the conclusion of the Æschylean tragedy, exhibiting these goddesses as guardian divinities on Athenian soil and benignant influences to the victim of Fate.

The typical tragic hero of antiquity exhibits the paradox at its strongest.

In the Trilogy of Æschylus we have actual guilt. We are not meant to look either on the indictment of the Furies or the apology of Orestes as wholly void; and it is possible to concede a certain validity to both. Such a validity indeed would be consistent, to some extent, even with the legal conceptions of modern law courts. How far the avenger of a father would be excused from the guilt of murder by a modern jury it is not easy to say; he would in all probability be neither acquitted nor executed. Still it remains that Orestes knew what he was doing in killing his mother; his deed may be excused but not denied. It is the choice of his will as well as the necessity of his fate; he works out the curse on his house by his own deliberate and impassioned purpose. When we turn to the tale of Ædipus, on the other hand, we see divinely ordained Fate and human Will in a distinct antagonism. It is as if Sophocles had felt dissatisfied with the delineation of his forerunner, and had

<sup>1</sup> Euripides, *Orestes*, 253 seq. Compare with the work both of Sophocles and Æschylus, as the rationalistic and mythologic account of the same reality.

set himself to complete the harmony of opposites by combining the aspect of guilt with acquittal of the seeming criminal. He enforces the paradox that he may exhibit the antithesis of ancestral guilt and individual innocence. He surrounds his hero with an atmosphere of remorse; he makes him his own executioner, and yet he lets him plead unanswerably that his seeming crimes are in truth his woes; they were "suffered rather than done."<sup>1</sup> The force of this plea, and its conjunction with the terrible penalty by which those deeds were visited, seems to make Œdipus the tragic hero for all time; as he was one whom the "maestro di color che sanno" must have had most constantly in mind.<sup>2</sup> No other legend, moreover, is so rich in august associations as that in which he appears. Much calling itself history has evidently been modelled upon it. The biographies of Cyrus and of Romulus borrow its incidents, and the narrative reappears in a wider and more ancient cycle; we find the same story on a more familiar page in the life of Moses, and recognise it again in the Assyrian hero Sargon. Whether or no the legend thus widespread of the lost infant adopted by parents not his own be in truth some mystic narrative allegorising a yearning belief in man's origin and destiny, it had a widespread fascination, which we may measure in recording that the greatest of those who tried their hand at it was not a poet. Time has mercifully withheld from us the Œdipus of Julius Cæsar; we may indulge the fancy that some mystic foreboding of a coming destiny haunted the hero whom his contemporaries regarded as the parricide of the Roman Republic, and animated what we may call, in some respects, the most illustrious attempt to delineate the typical hero of ancient tragedy. At any rate Œdipus presents in its com-

<sup>1</sup> *Œd. Col.* 266, 7.

<sup>2</sup> Dante so describes Aristotle (*Inferno*, iv. 131). See his *Poetica*, 1453. "Ἔστι δὲ τοιοῦτος ὁ μῆτε ἀρετῇ διαφέρων καὶ δικαιοσύνῃ, μῆτε διὰ κακίαν καὶ μοχθηρίαν μεταβάλλων εἰς τὴν δυστυχίαν, ἀλλὰ δι' ἁμαρτίαν τιμὰ, τῶν ἐν μεγάλῃ δόξῃ ὄντων. . . ὡς Οἰδίπους." From the numerous references to Œdipus in this treatise, it was evidently almost a type of the ideal tragedy.

pleteness that problem of guilt and disaster—of man as a unit, and man as a member of a group, which captivated the imagination of the speculative and argument-loving Greek, and took in ancient tragedy the place that in modern art is occupied by romantic love. As such it is worthy of detailed examination here.

*Œdipus  
the King*  
represents  
Man the  
fragment  
and Con-  
science the  
deceiver.

Laius, King of Thebes, learning from the oracle that he is destined to die by the hand of his son, gives his new-born babe into the hands of a herdsman to be exposed on the unvisited slope of Cithæron, and there to perish. As in most forms of this widespread legend the sufferings and helplessness of infancy appeal to the heart of the person charged with its destruction, and he saves its life. A comrade takes it to Corinth, where Polybus, the childless king, gladly adopts and brings up the babe, and from his swelled feet, which have been cruelly pierced with a pin, he named it Œdipus. Here, as supposed Prince of Corinth, the foundling grows up in a happy home with a loving father, and until his early maturity he has no reason to doubt his position and kinship. But suspicion is awakened by the taunt of a tipsy comrade which his adoptive father tries vainly to remove, and Œdipus goes secretly to Delphi to ascertain the truth. The god grants no answer to his question, but reveals to him a destiny yet more dreadful than that announced for him to Laius. He is to be the husband of his mother as well as the murderer of his father. He resolves to make such a crime impossible, and recoiling in horror from the return to his supposed parents, he finds himself on the way to Thebes. Here he meets his real father in a chariot with a band of attendants, and is roused to fury by an insolent command enforced by a savage blow from Laius himself, to clear out of his way. Œdipus is unarmed, but passion turns his staff to a lethal weapon, and after the fashion of heroes, he kills single-handed the king, and with one exception, afterwards the means of his self-detection, the whole escort. A speedy escape and his unarmed condition saves him from

all suspicion of the murder, and when next he appears at Thebes it is merely as a foreigner brought thither by pure chivalrous compassion for the sufferers in a great peril to the city. The Sphinx, a fearful monster with the strength of a lion and the voice of a woman, desolates the city with her ravages, tearing to pieces all who fail to answer her riddles. Œdipus, all conquering in wit as in bodily strength, answers the enigma—an easy enough one according to tradition, but not quoted in the play.<sup>1</sup> He is then promoted to the now vacant throne by a grateful people, and as the husband of Jocasta, the widowed queen, of whom he is in truth the only son, fulfils the dreadful oracle. But the deed, as unsuspected as it is innocent, is avenged by Fate. A pestilence breaks out. an oracle, consulted as to its cause, demands vengeance on the slayer of Laius; and after careful investigation, and a very unnatural amount of delay, the truth forces itself on the shuddering pair. Jocasta rushes to the only possible escape from her dreadful union; Œdipus, in a delirium of horror, refuses to look again on the blessed light of Heaven and tears out his own eyes. This violent expression of horror is made to seem not inconsistent with a character drawn with wonderful force and impressiveness—a character unbalanced, passionate, strongly swaying from one impetuous mood to its opposite, full of tenderness and prone to violent anger. And with this plunge into hopeless darkness we take our leave of Œdipus the King.

When we meet him in the second play bearing his name it is as Œdipus the blind and homeless wanderer, a pensioner on the bounty of the charitable, "asking little and gaining less." A greater contrast than the two positions of the hero it is impossible to conceive; the fall is from the utmost height to the lowest depth of human fortune. It is as if Dives had exchanged with Lazarus in this life. The events

*Œdipus at Colonus* represents Man the individual and Conscience the revealer.

<sup>1</sup> "What is the creature which is two-footed, three-footed, and four-footed, and weakest when it has most feet?" (Jebb's *Œdipus Tyrannus*, introduction, p. xxiii.)



of the intervening years, which must have been many, are not mentioned. He has been driven out from Thebes, and has led for long the life of a strolling beggar, his guide and inseparable companion being his daughter Antigone, the Cordelia of the ancient stage. A child at her father's self-blinding, she is now his mature support, his welfare her sole care; it is a characteristic touch in the contrast of the ancient and modern drama that no warmer love rivals her filial devotion. Long since she might have been a wife; for her father is now an aged man; and her brothers, then children, now divide Thebes in civil war. But her father's dying address, "None have loved you as I have," paint with a touch of egotism characteristic of him his unrivalled position in her heart and care as well as hers in his. A yet more important feature in this contrast is the striking reversibleness we have noted as characteristic of all Greek sympathy. Polynices and Eteocles, the sons of Œdipus, have taken something like the position of Goneril and Regan, but such a dramatic conception as the character of Lear's elder daughters is abhorrent to the spirit of Greek poetry, which will not represent any personage for whom it may not solicit some passing waft of sympathy. We are left with a strong feeling of compassion for Polynices, the Prince of Thebes; a French imitator,<sup>1</sup> who has substituted a scene of magnanimous pardon for the curse of Œdipus, makes a change almost indispensable in any modern adaptation. Still in a general way we may remember the sons of Œdipus with the elder daughters of Lear. They have consented at all events to his expulsion from the home in some corner of which, it appears, he had lived on in his blindness, and wished to end his unhappy life, and they are the object of a resentment from him so

<sup>1</sup> Ducis, *Œdipe à Colone* (1797), interpolates the Christian sentiment, *Crois tu qu'à pardonner un père ait tant de peine?*—an effusion which he is, however, unable to weave in with the rest of the play, and leaves with a clumsy and obvious junction.

bitter as to drive the reader to momentary sympathy with them.

If Polynices is an incomplete Regan, Antigone is a perfect Cordelia. Perhaps some might even prefer the Greek to the English heroine; the circumstances, at any rate, are such as to allow of a more complete picture of filial care. Antigone's opening speech is the utterance of touching unselfishness; her own weariness seems annihilated when she thinks of his—

and affords  
scope for  
a saintly  
character

"Rest on this unhewn rock thy weary limbs.  
Long is the road thine aged steps have trod."<sup>1</sup>

In this invitation, and in her preceding description of the nightingale-haunted grove to which their wanderings have led them, we seem to hear the gentle soothing tones of one who has to be eyes to the blind; while his somewhat pettish inquiry, "Where is it?" produces the ready offer, weary as she must be, at once to leave him in order to find out the name of the place of which her description awakens no knowledge in her father. The appearance of a passer-by saves her the journey, and from his shocked outcry at their position within the sacred grove they learn that they have reached the Athenian sanctuary of the awful goddesses, "daughters of Earth and Night."

"The all-seeing Gracious ones their name known here,  
Invoked by other gracious names elsewhere."<sup>2</sup>

The relief in the comment of *Œdipus* is like a transition to the major key—

"Then graciously may they their suppliant hear!  
Ne'er from this sacred grove will I depart."

And this kingly decision is followed by a request as unhesitating as that of a monarch, that Theseus, King of Athens, shall be brought to him, the beggar in his rags. The hearer recognises the voice of authority. "Thou must

<sup>1</sup> *Œd.* Col. 18-19.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* 42-43.

be noble in all but thy disaster," he says, justifying to himself his obedience. Œdipus at Colonus not only remembers his royal position, but by his kingly attitude enforces it on a stranger, who sees before him only a blind beggar and his guide, and after brief delay the audacious request receives entire obedience. Œdipus waits only to be assured by his daughter of the messenger's departure to pour forth an address to the awful goddesses, claiming the shelter and aid promised in their name by the god whom Æschylus represents as their opponent.

" Dreadful and venerable—since at your shrine  
First within this domain I bent the knee,  
Show yourself gracious, not to me alone.  
A god with me would here redeem his pledge—  
Phœbus, who erst, announcing troubles dire,  
Promised a shelter from life's long fierce storm  
When once the awful Deities were near.  
Hear me, sweet daughters of primæval night,  
Release the shade that once was Œdipus." <sup>1</sup>

His prayer is heard, the august Divinities are to accord him a speedy and a peaceful exit from the world of which he is so weary; and all that takes place between the opening and the closing scene is but a prelude to the fulfilment of that entreaty—not to modern feeling a very suitable prelude, but one all too like the experience of life. The altercation with his brother-in-law and his son, who vainly endeavour to persuade him to return to Thebes, jars on us grievously, but the gracious and noble figure of Theseus comes in to soften the sense of unseemly discord, and the tender sisterly farewell of Antigone to Polynices, with her vain attempt to reconcile the warring brothers, shows how little the spectator is meant to accept as a verdict the harsh feeling of Œdipus towards his son. Immediately on the departure of the young man a threefold crash of thunder announces to the aged

<sup>1</sup> *Œd. Col.* 84-110, shortened.

wanderer the promised deliverance—a deliverance which, earnestly as it is craved, yet now that it is actually at hand, awakens amid glad welcome and awe not unmingled with fear. Any feeling of reluctance is but momentary; the blind man rises, rejects the guidance to which he has clung so helplessly, and bids his guide follow him. Another day dawns on him, and he bids farewell to the earthly sunlight, so long invisible, and now to be no longer felt—

"O Light to me all dark, thou once wast mine,  
And now my body feels thy rays' last touch."<sup>1</sup>

The passing of Œdipus is awful and mysterious; we have already referred to the details in describing the passing of Sita. The blind becomes the seeing, the seeing becomes the blind. Œdipus sees what none but he can see, and under that guidance departs with a serene dignity to an invisible home. The reader recalls the words ascribed to Constantine when planning the walls of his new city—"I shall still advance till He, the invisible guide who marches before me, thinks proper to stop;"<sup>2</sup> and feels that Œdipus, the sightless wanderer, is now led by a hand surer than that of her who has been hitherto his faithful guide. Under this guidance he quits the scene with firm tread, takes up his station on the edge of a precipitous chasm communicating, it was supposed, with the underworld, as one who had the most intimate and minute knowledge of the ground, and bids his daughters a solemn and tender farewell. "Me, who have loved you most, you see no more." The last greeting is interrupted by an awful summons—"Œdipus, why lingerest thou?" A shudder thrills the hearts of the spectators, but Œdipus concludes with untroubled serenity his charge to Theseus, gives his daughters their last embrace, sends them from him, and keeps by his

<sup>1</sup> *Œd.* Col. 1549-1550.

<sup>2</sup> See Gibbon, ch. xvii. note 30.

side only the kingly hero who has once himself descended to Hades, and is permitted to watch the actual translation. The spectators learn it from the account of a messenger who follows Antigone and Ismene "with streaming eyes," and can only report that when he looked back he saw

"The hero nowhere present to our sight—  
The king his eyes o'ershadowing with his hands  
As from some vision beyond mortal scope.  
Nothing was there for tears or for lament,  
For wonder only, and o'erwhelming awe."<sup>1</sup>

The awful  
Divinities  
present  
both  
aspects  
of Con-  
science.

The awful divinities under whose protection this mystic translation takes place are so unlike the Furies in the representation of Æschylus that it is almost impossible to keep their identity clear in our minds. The vast transition from the baleful to the beneficent character is only a part of their change; there is also a receding, an encircling cloud of mystery mingled with their halo which, while it adds to the sense of their divinity, yet also prepares the way for their complete sublimation under the rationalising touch of Euripides. As compared with that of the earlier poet the representation of Sophocles is almost modern; we have to set it beside the representation of his junior to throw it back into relationship with an earlier mythology. The grove of the Eumenides at Colonus is like a temple of Isis—like a shrine, we may say, of the Virgin Mary—a symbol of the pitying, healing influence in the heavens, as opposed and yet in close relationship with that of the stern monarch and judge. The plural character of the symbol here seems indeed to infuse an added vagueness; to speak of them as "they" tends to remove them from the realm of personality and soften them to an abstraction. Thus when we reach Euripides we find ourselves on the soil of allegory; we contemplate the sense of guilt in man, as with Sophocles

<sup>1</sup> *Œd. Col.* 1648–1665, shortened.



we contemplate the sense of innocence; but this sceptic touch in the younger poet somewhat blurs the lesson of his forerunners. We will not attempt to follow the bewildering wealth of Greek thought, let us confine our attention to the great original of all tragedy and his immediate successor. The resemblance and contrast of Æschylus and Sophocles more than suffice to such an attempt as the present to delineate the moral ideal of Greece.

Æschylus and Sophocles alike present the double aspect of guilt, the element in it which belongs to man the fragment, the heir to past error and its results, the reaper of a harvest sown before the beginning of his earthly existence; and then again, on the other hand, that which belongs to man the individual, reaping the harvest which he himself has sown. In the elder poet, elder by a generation when years were as decades, the predominant conception is that of the early world, to which man was essentially the fragment of his family or his race, sharing in their guilt as well as their fate. With the younger poet, man the individual emerges into significance for the first time, we may say, in classic literature. The deed in which Will had no part is indignantly, and we feel righteously, repudiated as not in the true sense of the word a deed, but a calamity. Who could be more free from blood-guiltiness than one who, having fled from the home of his supposed father in order to avoid the guilt of parricide, had killed in self-defence a stranger attacking him with a superior force, and married the unknown queen of a city he had just delivered from a deadly pest? Œdipus carries us with him in his indignant self-justification and its conclusion—

To Man  
the  
Fragment,  
deceptive;  
to Man the  
Individual,  
redemp-  
tive.

"These ills were Heaven's decree,  
Perchance indignant with our race of yore,"<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Æd. Col.* 964-965.

Of course from a modern point of view this feeling is the right one. It is the father, who purposed to kill his son, not that son, who purposed *not* to kill his father, who is the real murderer. But this, if it be taken alone, is not the point of view intended for the spectator of the tragedy—it was not at any rate the view taken by Œdipus at first; he then bowed before the decree which hurled him from his throne, and executed the vengeance of Heaven on himself by depriving himself of its blessed light. And we must note, what is yet more significant, that it is not the view of the drama taken by the great critic of antiquity when he pointed out Œdipus<sup>1</sup> as the typical figure for a tragic hero because he was not wholly guilty or wholly innocent. The aim of tragedy, says Aristotle, being to arouse pity and fear, it is thwarted alike by the calamities which are wholly deserved and by those which are wholly undeserved. The punishment of a villain, he continues, may satisfy the philanthropist, but rouses nothing of the sentiment appropriate to tragedy, stirring neither the compassion nor the fear the production of which he has defined as its aim. Its hero must be one like Œdipus, whose calamities arise not from vice but from some great error, and by *ἀμαρτία* he evidently means something partaking of the character of guilt. If we could enter into this spirit we must quit the standpoint from which guilt is Will, and action apart from choice has no moral element; we must suppose that in some sense, however hard for us to follow, a family or a race can be guilty, as well as a man. We must accord some place to the spirit that looks on sin as something objective, some great reality, external to individual choice, enclosing it as an atmosphere. We must teach ourselves to regard the dogma of original sin as a great historic influence, whatever we may think of it on theologic grounds.

<sup>1</sup> Aristotle, *Poetica*, quoted above, p. 189 n.

If we say that the Furies typify the tortures of remorse, that their aspect as the kindly ones expresses the peace of forgiveness, or of that acquittal in which we may recognise the voice of conscience, we gather up a large part of the poet's meaning but not the whole, and on the other hand we import into the interpretation something he did not mean. We must contrive to imagine some feeling not unlike remorse aroused by an action in which Will had no part. And again on the side of Fate we must even more quit the strict lines of logic. The Greek idea of Fate is not so much a definite limitation of human Will, as a mysterious warp to which Will is illogically conceived as the woof. It is impossible to express the relation between the two coherently; the legends which have given Fate its significance record some protest against the belief in Fate, but leave their relation indeterminate and indeed logically irreconcilable. The very desire to know the future is rooted in the belief that it lies with man to change the future. If *Cædipus* were fated to slay his father and marry his mother, why poison the fragment of life unstained by crime with any prevision of the inevitable? His attempt to escape the announced parricide implies a disbelief in the oracle which announces it. Yet the legend is itself the strongest evidence for the infallible element in oracles. No foresight, short of an absolute power to read the future, will explain the prevision of a chance encounter between a king and a stranger. We can explain it only by supposing that the life of man is a volume that may be read both ways, the Future lying open to the Seer as the Past to the ken of an ordinary mortal; that the trivial accident, no less than the tragic achievement, is already fixed. Yet in that case the whole object for consulting the oracle would be gone, no one would seek to know the calamities it was absolutely impossible to avert. In truth it is impossible to say that the oracle

The Greek  
deserts  
logic rather  
than  
confront an  
absolute  
power.

was consistently either believed or disbelieved. Sometimes it seems to have been regarded as that which must happen, and sometimes as that which might be prevented from happening. Greek love of freedom blurs the outline of the Greek belief in Fate. The two incompatible ideas are held together, and we must forget logic when we try to judge of their mutual relations.

•  
Greek  
horror of  
monarchy  
and dread  
of indivi-  
dual pre-  
eminence.

The instinct which thus blurred Divine authority is the same as that which made monarchy hateful. Whether we say that Fate is the Will of Zeus, or that Fate is some influence antithetic to all Will whatever, in each case we find something to explain away. "Not thou, dear child, but the gods, are responsible for this,"<sup>1</sup> the gracious Priam consoles the shamefaced Helen, as they survey together the hosts her flight has brought to Troy for the destruction of his city. But the consistent application of this identification of Fate with the Divine Will would necessitate the sacrifice of all that is most striking in Greek poetry. Zeus feels the law of Fate as a king feels the laws of Nature; he cannot apportion the lot of rival heroes<sup>2</sup> without reference to some standard independent of his Will; and whatever be the meaning of the balance in which he weighs these contrasted fates, it is something which far removes him from Omnipotence. He is a temporal monarch, his origin is a subject of legend, he has passed through infancy, his dominion is characterised by the harshness incident to "new rule."<sup>3</sup> Surely a reign which has had a beginning shall have an end. The dread of such a contingency is easily raised within his own mind; he is terrified at learning that he is doomed, if he contract certain nuptials, to beget a son mightier than himself; he exhausts all his arts to wring from the representative of Foresight a fuller knowledge of his own destiny.<sup>4</sup> The destiny of Zeus! The very

<sup>1</sup> *Iliad*, iii. 164-165.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* xxii. 209.

<sup>3</sup> *Æschylus, Prometheus Vincit*, 34-35.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* 947-951, 988-989.

words express the Greek reluctance to contemplate steadily any form of absolute power, the Greek tendency to bring in continually some counterbalancing influence to all that is monarchic. Behind the throne of a god who is so far from being omnipotent that he is not even omniscient, hovers a dim mysterious power, so vague that we may or may not give it a moral colouring as our own sympathies incline, which we cannot bring into definite relation with the Will of any other being, Divine or human. As it is not entirely subordinate to the Will of God, so it is not entirely supreme above the Will of man, it eludes a steady gaze, like the minor stars. This incoherence is significant of the whole political life of Greece. The same feeling which confuses monarchy on Olympus, banishes it from the city; the impatience of individual authority is common to the visible and the invisible worlds. The dread of any overpowering personal predominance is the more striking because it is in a certain sense opposed to the genius of a vivid dramatic people. But the peculiarities which most strike an observer as national characteristics are largely made up of precautions against national temptations;<sup>1</sup> the strong tendency to differentiation which in Greece produced so many types of genius, must have been in so small a State as the Greek city a perpetual source of danger, and Greek feeling in every direction was strongly tinged by anxiety to guard against it. How much the danger impressed a teacher who sought to bring these States within the circuit of a larger citizenship, we may gather from the frequent use by St. Paul, in addressing the Corinthians, of the term we translate "to be puffed up,"<sup>2</sup> an expression which, except in addressing the Greek Christians, is not used in the New Testament. And turning back half a millennium we find an implicit warning, significant in its reticence, exactly coinciding with St. Paul's explicit warning. Æschylus,

<sup>1</sup> Ostracism, for instance, was at once an honour and a penalty.

<sup>2</sup> *φυσίω*, 1 Cor. iv. 6, 18, 19; v. 2, &c.



in telling the tale of Persian ruin, crowds the page with Persian names—mostly, one would suppose, his own invention—but throughout the play which celebrates the Greek valour that had just worked a miracle, does not mention by name a single Greek. Miltiades and Themistocles, names which shine through a haze of two thousand years with undiminished brilliancy, might be supposed with perfect dramatic propriety to be known at the barbaric court where lies the scene of the drama. But their countryman never allows himself to mention them; he celebrates the triumph of Athens, he will bring no individual into rivalry with the city of Athens. The poet here speaks as the genius of Greece. The orators of a later age looked back with longing regret to the patriotic modesty of the earlier heroes, when “no one called Salamis a victory of Themistocles, but of the Athenian people; no one gave the glory of Marathon to Miltiades, but to the city,”<sup>1</sup> the name of the general being left for silent gratitude. The “jealousy of the gods” is shared by the city, the unseen power admits no rivalry from any seen power. It seems as if the poet felt that for a mortal to be clothed in the dazzling radiance which shone upon the day of Greek deliverance was more than mortal could bear. History justifies such mistrust; the leaders of the victorious host should all have fallen like the victor of Thermopylæ, if they were to keep their fame untarnished.<sup>2</sup> Miltiades, Themistocles, Pausanias—all must have envied Leonidas. It would not be easy throughout the whole range of modern history to find such traitors as Themistocles and Pausanias, and the inglorious death in prison of the victor of Marathon<sup>3</sup> is a hardly less expressive lesson on the dangers of Greek glory. If the banishment of Aristides,

<sup>1</sup> Demosthenes, or whoever wrote *περὶ συντάξεως*, 172.

<sup>2</sup> See Plato, *Gorgias*, p. 519.

<sup>3</sup> Grote does not believe that Miltiades was put in prison; see his arguments, iv. 496. The reader must choose between him and Plutarch. The hero's death was in any case overshadowed by disgrace.

illustrating the grudging impatience of superiority felt by the vulgar, exhibit the other side of the danger, yet the very institution which gave effect to the popular jealousy tends to show that itself the feeling was but the alloy of an instinct guarding the race dowered with genius from the temptations of an Alcibiades, and preserving the city from the perils inseparable from the greatness of her sons.

This dread of extravagant aim is shown vividly on the page of Greek history. We have seen how the sense of human vicissitude, disguised in a misleading garb as "the envy of the gods," weaves a continued strain of pathos into the narrative of Herodotus; the belief itself is perhaps even more striking when it surprises us in the dry neutral narrative of his successor. Not a single word from Thucydides reveals belief in any power but that of man; and yet the shadow of some influence that seems to mock at the hopes of man falls on his page, and the strange dramatic contrast between men's hopes and their fortunes, in the imagination of his reader, intensifies the narrative of facts into an utterance of regret and a claim for compassion. As he describes the modest desire of Nicias, "to leave to posterity a name associated with no disaster to the city,"<sup>1</sup> he suggests the terrible catastrophe by which the name of Nicias is for ever associated with the greatest disaster that Athens ever knew. The description of the Athenian Armada's start for Sicily glows with picturesque colouring; the historian's dry tradesmanlike account of the expense incurred in this, the most costly expedition ever sent out from Athens, is mingled with a richness of detail that seems almost to belong to the page of romance. We see the crowds hurrying from an emptied city to the Piræus; those who hastened to embrace sons and brothers they were never to see again, jostled by idlers eager to behold a spectacle of splendour "exceeding belief"; the flashing gold and silver goblets catch our eye as the

Greek  
history  
justifies  
Greek  
dread of  
arrogance.

<sup>1</sup> Thucydides, v. 16.

libations are poured on the decks of the noble fleet, gay with a wealth of adornment that attracts the admiring gaze even of those from whom it bears away their nearest and dearest. We hear the clarion note of the trumpet announce a solemn prayer which goes up from the united army and from the attendant crowds on the banks as from one man, and the musical thunder of the pæan, as it mingles with the rattle of weighed anchors, and the last bustle of the final start. All that tells of pride and hope in that description reminds us that, of the joyous army then flushed with anticipations of victory, some few stragglers alone are to return to Athens with a ghastly tale of dead left unburied on a foreign soil, and wounded abandoned to a more cruel fate. That impressive contrast on the page of Thucydides expresses a creed as well as an event. As we compare the triumphant but not unreasonable hope with which the Sicilian expedition was decided on, with the unmatched disaster in which it issued, we feel that the jealous fate which had shattered the pride of the Great King was to the Greek no partial Deity, but a supreme influence casting down all unmeasured ambition, and constantly bringing in unexpected hope to the vanquished, unexpected humiliation to the conqueror. It seemed the very same power which saved Athens from Persia, and Syracuse from Athens. It was the ultimate Divine influence of the Hellenic world, the God of proportion, of balanced forces. When Athens is threatened by the might of Asia, she rises; when her power appears to justify the aim at dominion within the Hellenic world, she falls. There is no room on the soil of Greece for a "tyrant city";<sup>1</sup> that miniature Europe does not allow any rehearsal of the part of Rome. The Greek ideal is that of equal and independent states, and those efforts which aim at empire foreshadow a rapid national decay.

<sup>1</sup> Thucydides, i. 122, 124.

It is a striking illustration both of the brief duration and the balanced dualism of Greek life, that two historians may have known each other, of whom the elder chronicled the brightness of its spring, and the younger the glowing decay of its autumn. If we imagine Froissart and Gibbon as contemporaries, we bring home to our minds some shadow of the rich variety shown forth in the contrast between the historians of the Persian and Peloponnesian wars. How wonderful is the adaptation of each writer to the subject he has made familiar to every student! There never was a narrator more perfectly adapted to the earlier tale than Herodotus. He tells of the glory of Greece, and Greek feeling moulds every line. All that is here set forth might be justified and illustrated from his page alone. Homer is not more fitly the singer of the legends than Herodotus a narrator of the events which made Greece a unity. The reader who knows him, and him alone, is familiar with all that is most characteristic of Greek feeling and Greek life. All, we repeat, that is *most* characteristic. The cold scepticism of Thucydides has its own place; it is but one phase of the Greek desire to see the other side; it is such an example of Greek balance, Greek impartiality, as we find elsewhere only in Aristotle. But if a reader desire to make acquaintance with Greek life in a single book, we should give him Herodotus. There he finds not only what is best worth remembering in the history of Greece, but what stands out from the history known to students, and takes its place in the history known to all readers, and to some who can scarcely claim a place even among readers; the history which seasoned the world of allusion and proverb, and which glides into the mind almost apart from conscious effort. And there too he finds the fitting spirit in which such history should be chronicled—the unquestioning belief in the Invisible, coupled with the profound sense of a national vocation; the light touches of delicate humour and keen sarcasm without which this

Herodotus expresses the feeling on its poetic and popular side.



conception would have lacked its true counterpoise and appropriate relief. There he finds history written in the dialect in which it reaches the dreamer, the idler, the lover of gossip, of anecdote, of moral reflection. In that dialect it was fit that the world should possess the history of the blossoming time of that race which presents the bewitching aspect of vast hope, immense promise, and immortal fame.

Thucydides in a dry statement of facts.

For the history of its decay another voice was needed, a voice reaching a much smaller audience, but a voice of equal significance, for some of its hearers we may say a greater significance. Thucydides sets forth the prose life of Greece with no less perfection than Herodotus sets forth its poetry. At the touch of his cold accuracy some illusions disappear. The legend of Plutarch, we find, needs revision. We perceive that Spartans could be cowards.<sup>1</sup> But we never set down such violations of our anticipation to the partiality of an Athenian combatant. If the information be erroneous, prejudice has no hand in the error. The speeches are avowed compositions of the historian, illustrating Greek taste for dramatic composition and antithesis, and not Thucydidean adherence to fact. But here we may say with a force of meaning not always present in the commonplace, that the exception does indeed prove the rule. These speeches have every degree of *vraisemblance*. In some Thucydides was an actual hearer, in others he is exercising his imagination as much as Walter Scott in his picture of Louis XI., and he makes no distinction between the two.<sup>2</sup> Yet an English historian as careful and accurate as Grote, treats almost all as sound authority for matter of fact.<sup>3</sup> A similar laxity with any other author would have startled him; if he had found some speech

<sup>1</sup> Thucydides, iii. 109-111.

<sup>2</sup> Besides, even when Thucydides had heard the speeches, he hints that he had forgotten them before introducing them into his History (i. 22). After the explanation given there, his reminiscences as an auditor would go for nothing in an English court of justice.

<sup>3</sup> The only exception I can recall throughout the twelve bulky volumes is in the prelude to the Melian massacre, noticed above, vii. 150 *seq.*



written by Dr. Johnson for the *Gentleman's Magazine* before reporting was allowed in Parliament, quoted as authentic material for the biography of the speaker, he would have probably looked with suspicion on any other statement from the same pen. But such is the glamour of Greek impartiality that it is by the Englishman mistaken for accuracy. If the speeches in the history had betrayed the slightest bias, if the reader had been reminded as he read that the supposed reporter was an Athenian, Grote would never have referred to the speeches without some sifting prelude, or would have settled once for all what residuum of fact might be extracted from an avowed composition by an acute and competent witness embodying what was likely to have been said by his contemporaries. But the spirit of balance is so like truth that the two things, from a little distance, seem indistinguishable.

This spirit of balance is perhaps nowhere else so impressive to a modern reader as on the page of Thucydides. It is not that we find there any charm of imagination (the speeches are generally uninteresting), but we nowhere else come upon anything so modern in tone. We feel ourselves perusing a page of modern history. The resemblance is not a superficial or accidental one. The nations of Europe had their Catholic unity as the cities of Greece had their Hellenic unity; and in some respects the invasion of Greece by Persia may be set beside the Crusades as an analogous influence in that unity. And then came a time when the nations of Europe were divided at the Reformation as the cities of Greece in the Peloponnesian war. Athens and Sparta represent severally a democratic and aristocratic ideal,<sup>1</sup> as the Teutonic and the Romance nations represent severally an individualistic and corporate ideal. Thucydides thus speaks, in a certain sense, as a prophet of national evolution. He

His warn-  
ing against  
Party  
Spirit

<sup>1</sup> Democratic, that is, in the ancient, not the modern sense. In the latter the two would be distinguished only as a modern Conservative from an old-fashioned Tory.

sees its dangers, in the case of his own countrymen, with a prophet's energy of warning. It is one which has lost none of its significance for his modern readers; rather we may say it has gained in significance with every chapter of the great volume that has been opened since. The unlikeness in the development of modern Europe and ancient Greece is as instructive as the likeness. The wars of the Reformation initiated an era of vigorous national development, the Peloponnesian war initiated an era of civil decay. What we call religion is not always a higher or more inspiring principle of action than what we call politics; both are allied with party spirit, and in the case of religion the alliance is more disastrous. But party spirit is more fatal to a city than to a nation. It is the foe of patriotism everywhere and always, but the patriotism of a nation is large enough to conquer it. Greece throughout the century of the Persian and Peloponnesian wars was hesitating between the prophetic dawning of a national self-consciousness and the life of the city. It was the smaller life which conquered, and the power to struggle with its foe was lost.

Its disin-  
tegrating  
influence.

If there be any principle of corporate union of which we may say broadly that it is evil, we may say it of party spirit. It is a deliberate refusal to hear the other side. In all that binds there must be some good; and since almost all that binds also separates, there will be probably some evil also. But surely nowhere else is the gain so small and the loss so great as in the antagonism of party. Reversing the noble sentence of Antigone, the political partisan may almost say, "I was not born to share their love, but hate." On that soil all love withers and all hate flourishes. The love of country is the love of the neighbour. It sets us in kindly relationship with those of whom we know most, for whom we can do most; it includes every variety of opinion, of circumstance, of character; it contains within itself lessons of tolerance and forbearance, and it becomes in a healthy mind an expansive feeling, passing beyond its own

large boundaries and ready to embrace the world. It may no doubt pass into the hatred of the foreigner, but so far as it does this it ceases to be an influence concerning the life of every day. Irrational dislike, if it must be felt at all, had better be felt for those whom we rarely see, and have small power to injure. When it is turned into the current of partisan feeling it sets up a principle of division in every household, and stirs hostility where the power to give pain is at its highest. It is the parent of that "madness in the brain" that comes from being "wroth with one we love." Its bonds have no elasticity. The patriot is the possible philanthropist. The partisan is as much cut off from that possibility as is the mere egotist. For, however numerous the sharers of his sympathies, those sympathies have nothing catholic in them. Party spirit is that spirit of taste, of preference, already strong enough in every man, reinforced by a sense of duty. Friendship on such a basis is a house built on the sand, for the ally may any day become the traitor. Enmity, on the other hand, is a fortress on a rock, for the foe can never become the trusted ally. It is the negative principle of human intercourse, put in the place of the positive.

These considerations refer to party spirit at all times and in all places. Wherever it prevails it is a solvent of friendship and natural affection; an antagonist to pity, generosity, and justice. But it never again shows itself in its naked repulsiveness as in the history of Greece. For no modern life is quite so sensitive to party spirit as was the city life of antiquity. It is hurtful to all national feelings, but a nation is large enough to absorb and triumph over it. A city becomes its prey. England has survived the rise and fall of many parties. But when Greece was divided between oligarchic Sparta and democratic Athens its life was rent asunder in the strife. It is true that Athens was a small city, and that the adherents of Democracy were a large party; but the smallest city is less exclusive than the largest

Party  
Spirit the  
death of  
Greek civil  
life

party. A family, a tribe, a city, a nation—any natural group whatever—is founded on something more expansive than the spirit of choice, even at its best. Thus the exchange of patriotism for partisan feeling in Greece was a narrowing influence, even though it did exchange a number of small groups for two large ones. And it is still more to our purpose to note that Greece was disloyal to its fundamental principle when it gave itself up to the spirit which refuses to hear the other side. Greek feeling lost its moral standard, Greek liveliness was converted to hatred. “I swear to be eternally hostile to the commonalty, and to do it all the harm in my power *by my counsels*,”<sup>1</sup> was an oath actually taken by members of the oligarchic party in the time of Aristotle. Hatred and treachery were thus incorporated in political life, and Greece broken up into warring factions ceased to be in any sense a unity.

The Attic  
orators and  
the idea of  
the Nation.

But the stirrings of national aspiration are recorded in the eloquence of Greece. As poetry is connected with the life of individual relation, and hence especially with the life of the family, so is eloquence connected with the life of the nation. All eloquence is, in ideal, forensic or parliamentary. We speak of an eloquent sermon, but the epithet is of ambiguous import; the ear detects in it a faint tinge of irony, or at least of a judgment relegating the work to a different sphere from that intended for it by its author. Eloquence is for the bar and the senate; it is out of place in the pulpit; it is the dialect of one who seeks primarily to secure actions, only secondarily to implant convictions. The two aims cannot be rigorously severed, but they may always be distinguished and must often be recognised as mutually hostile. The philosopher as much as the preacher shrinks from the suspicion of rhetoric; most of all perhaps does the man of science recognise it as his foe. We shall understand Plato only if we remember that he lived through the period when eloquence was the universal aim and con-

<sup>1</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*, 1310a.

stant danger of Athens; and note its double influence on his own utterance. He himself neither missed the glory nor escaped the danger, and in his great pupil, dissimilar to him as he is, we can hardly fail to see some influence from these combined warnings of precept and example. If there be any writings describable as the reverse of eloquent we may bestow that epithet on what remains to us of Aristotle.<sup>1</sup> The spirit of science is indeed as hostile to eloquence as the spirit of politics is favourable to it; only on this latter soil does it flourish as a healing growth; elsewhere it more or less degenerates to a noxious weed. Hence when we compare eloquence with poetry, we recognise the different hold on our sympathies of that which changes with the ebb and flow of national life, and that which these tides cannot reach. We may detach a poem from its surroundings, and read it merely for its beauty; but eloquence, for any adequate appreciation, needs either contemporary attention or elaborate comment. The words of Æschylus appeal to us to-day as they did to their first audience; nothing is needed for their apprehension but a knowledge of the Greek language and a power, perhaps not quite so common as it is usually supposed, of entering into sympathy with profound and simple emotion. The words of Demosthenes, on the other hand, need the explanation of historians and of scholars to be, for the ordinary reader, anything but tiresome. They belong to the realm of most vivid interest to the generation which listened to them; even the spectators of the *Persæ* or the *Prometheus* could not have been held by a spell as vivid as that which riveted the listeners to the oration *On the Crown*. But the vividness belongs to that life which, long as it outlasts the three score years and ten of mortality, yet is doomed to pass away. When we turn from poetry to

<sup>1</sup> The well-known praise of his "suavity" by Cicero goes against the above, and it must also be remembered that his extant works are supposed to be rather notes for (or from) lectures than finished discourses. Still it seems to me impossible that any writing of Aristotle's can ever have been what we mean by eloquent.



eloquence we realise the difference between a spirit that lasts for ages and a spirit that stands out of relation to Time.

Isocrates expresses but misconceives the national craving for Unity.

The whole course of Greek eloquence is animated by a yearning after that national life which came then so near and seemed to be attainable by a mere step. The attack on the great enemy of Greece with which it was associated in the mind of the orators was an ideal condition of this unity for those who held the tradition of a united Greece in opposition to Asia. The actual Persia had succeeded the Homeric Troy; the two conflicts blended in a halo somewhat bewildering to modern sight, for which their significance is so different. If Greece was to be one as against Troy, she must, it was supposed, repeat that struggle which had been the only opportunity on which Greece had emerged as a Nation. So at least it seemed to the "old man eloquent" who lived through the century of Greek decay, perceiving that the time was come for Greece to enter on the life of national maturity, but blind to the fact that its foe was no longer in Persia but in Macedon. The sonnet of Milton from which this description of Isocrates is taken, and which is the only channel through which the English reader knows anything about him, is misleading as to his actual attitude towards Macedon. Philip was to him not the coming "great king" against whom Athens and Sparta alike had to be on their guard, but the possible general for Athens and Sparta against the "great king" of the past. A new expedition of Hellas against Asia, intervening between the memories of Homer and the hidden future of the Crusades, glimmered before his vision, shorn of all that was arduous and painful, "a religious procession rather than a campaign,"<sup>1</sup> so we are driven to render the stately and untranslatable Greek. But this predecessor of Peter the Hermit pealed

<sup>1</sup> θεωρία μὲν μᾶλλον ἢ στρατεία προσεικώς (Isocrates, *Panegyric*, 182). The whole oration illustrates the way in which a Greek nation seemed bursting into life while the City State still clutched its independence, and city antipathies showed no softening. See especially his denunciation of Sparta.

forth in his old age a warning that had long ceased to be relevant to actual facts. He sought to start an expedition against Asia while the foe was enclosed within the same small peninsula which held Athens and Sparta: his eye was on the telescope while the foe was at the gate. He was killed, Milton tells us, by the "dishonest victory" of Chæroneia. But passing over the fact that we can hardly attribute political importance to the close of a life almost completing its century, a letter to Philip subsequent to Chæroneia shows him to have been still in the eyes of Isocrates the new Agamemnon for a new Trojan war. "When once you have led Greece against Asia,"<sup>1</sup> he tells Philip, "nothing will remain for you but to become a god." His address to the one who was actually to lead Greece against Asia shows equal blindness to the future. Alexander, we find, is already known (at the age of fourteen) as a philanthropist, a philhellene, a philosopher.<sup>2</sup> No document bequeathed by history can exceed in significance and interest this greeting from the aged orator to the conqueror, still in the schoolroom—a philhellene indeed, but a lover whose love was to be fatal to its object. The letter is a warning to all who would deny the significance in the world of politics of the great truth of Evolution. The warning as a practical guide is hardly needed for our own age, but there is no age which may not gain in insight and apprehension from learning how far an acute mind and an experience prolonged beyond the ordinary span of man will fail to read the future, unless it bring into the range of political ideas the truth that national life, like all other life, is subject to growth and to decay.

This reluctance of a race to take up the responsibilities of a nation is a fact men are slow to allow for, perhaps

The race  
dreads  
what the  
individual  
craves.

<sup>1</sup> Isocrates, *Ep.* iii. 6. See Jebb, *Attic Orators* (2nd edit.), vol. ii. p. 257 and p. 30 (date 338: shortly after Chæroneia: probably after conclusion of peace between Philip and Athens).

<sup>2</sup> Isocrates, *Ep.* v. Jebb, vol. ii. p. 253. date probably 342.

because it is so unlike anything in the analogous development of individual life. Youth looks forward eagerly, and welcomes maturity. Who ever entered on his twenty-first birthday with reluctance? Young people are warned by their elders that their happiest time is slipping away; they do not disbelieve the assurances of experience, but they cannot feel the truth urged by all who are in a position to realise it. It is "more life and fuller that I want"—this is still their feeling. The world beyond them may be one of suffering, but it is one of action, and to the young both are far preferable to neither. In the city life which preceded national life the conditions are all different; perhaps we may say that they are inverted. For Athens, Sparta, and Thebes to consent to become mere portions of Hellas would have been in some respects as though the young man were to return to the schoolroom. No doubt it would have been in fact to participate in a larger, grander life than they had ever known; it would have been to give patriotism a new meaning and a new dimension. But it would have been also to lose the vividness of that sense of unity which appertained to the City State, and to lose this seemed to the men of that time to lose everything. Their conceptions of a larger unity were dim or distasteful. It is true that the Athenians in the age of Alexander had before their eyes both the oldest nation in the world and the youngest. They had always confronted, with reverent interest, the mystic antiquity of Egypt; when Isocrates wrote to Philip they saw a young Macedon on their borders. But we see from the treatise of their greatest political thinker as well as from all the facts of their history that no citizen of Athens or Sparta could bring himself to believe that his city stood in the same relation to Time as the world of non-Hellenic States, and must equally accept progress or decay. Vainly had Plato<sup>1</sup> reminded the Athenians that their division of Greek and

<sup>1</sup> *Politicus*, 263.

barbarian was as if the cranes divided the animal world into cranes and not-cranes. We can almost forgive the narrowness of vision that seems inseparable from the torch-bearer in the twilight. Yet if to reconstruct history in imagination be not too presumptuous an effort, it was a calamity to the world. It seems as if a Hellenic nation two millenniums ago might have obviated some of the greatest misfortunes which still oppress civilised mankind. We should hardly have a Turkey in Europe now if we could look back in the fourth century before Christ on a united and independent Greece.

We may measure the decay of the civil life of antiquity by the rise of what we should call in modern language *professional* life, especially on its military side. The theory of the City State was that the citizen should be soldier, lawyer, juryman, member of Parliament, all in one—that these were but various functions of one agent. In the time of Alexander this multiform unity had perished: Athens engaged pleaders, and hired soldiers, none of either class being necessarily Athenians.<sup>1</sup> It is in the rise of the military profession that the change is most apparent. Modern opinion is still divided as to the wisdom of an exclusive military class; the belief that every man not debarred by physical infirmity should be a potential soldier has many adherents in this opening of the twentieth century, which has heard strong arguments for conscription. But as a fact the imperial position of England has been won by an army which every Englishman had the choice of entering, while in every war not on English soil, no discredit attaches to one who remains a spectator. The nation can afford this liberty, not so the city. Civil and military life in the ideal of antiquity are inseparable. It was the triumph of Demosthenes that for a moment he called back this ideal when it had almost passed out of sight. When he thundered against Macedon

Athens endeavoured to combine the interests of a nation with the exclusions of a City.

<sup>1</sup> Dionysius, *Isæus*, i, quoted in Jebb's *Attic Orators*, ii. 263.

the citizen had ceased to be a soldier. Arms had become a profession, as it is in our time; more a separate profession than it is in our own time; for the men who fight for England are necessarily British subjects. The military life to the victors of Salamis was a part of the duty of the citizen. To the vanquished of Chæroneia it was indeed, as Demosthenes forced the Athenians to recognise, still the duty of the citizen, but it had become the business of the non-citizen. The armies of his time were mercenary bands, hardly less dreaded by the States they defended than by those they attacked; and had they been all as loyal to their employers as Dugald Dalgetty it would still remain true that their existence was fatal to the city. Their character is irrelevant to the significance of the fact that recourse should be had by a State to a set of paid fighters in place of its own sons. In a city there is no room for an army; when it is needed the time has come for separate cities to merge their independence in a larger union. The cohesive power and the space needed for the profession of arms if it is to be held in a subordinate position to a higher authority, and own that spirit of loyalty apart from which an army is a school of cruelty and treachery, is to be found nowhere but in a nation.

The moral ideal of classic life was bound up with the City State.

The decay of patriotism is always a disaster, but it is not, in modern life, necessarily fatal to all high and unselfish aims. It may be the shadow of a strong feeling for something that is larger even than a nation. In the City State of antiquity this decay neither sprung from nor admitted of any such compensation. When patriotism withered, a blight came over the whole moral ideal of that age. What a Greek or Roman meant by a good man was a good citizen. A good man, in the modern conception, may possibly be an indifferent citizen; a good citizen may certainly be an immoral man. Or rather the very word citizen has ceased to be appropriate, and the difficulty



of finding another with which to replace it shows that the relation it expresses has changed its importance. An English or a French man may be in all private relations just, truthful, and generous, and may take very little interest in the welfare of his country. It is a defect in him that he fails to do so, no doubt; still a man may have some good qualities and not all good qualities. But how much more than this we should mean if we were to speak of an Athenian as indifferent to the welfare of Athens! The difference between him and a similar Englishman is twofold. In one sense England is too large to be to an Englishman what Athens was to an Athenian; in another sense it is too small. It is not an entity that can be associated with definite and familiar images and duties of daily and welcome recurrence, with ideas all called up at once by the word *home*. It requires some power of abstraction to take in. And then again it is only a part of that whole which a modern contemplates as making just the same sort of claim that in the ancient world the city made upon the citizen. The nation is a whole at once more vast and more incomplete than was the city. It loses unity both as a combination of many classes and interests, and also as a fraction of humanity. It refers to unities below itself and a unity above; and though it has a unity of its own, and one of a majestic and enduring character, still we feel that many causes may prevent good men from entering into any conscious relation with this unity: they may fail to respond to the claim which it makes, and yet be worthy of much respect. But a Greek who was indifferent to political duty had no other duty to fall back upon bearing any comparison with that which he neglected. When he ceased to care primarily for political life, the State must perish.

The new life to which we may venture to say that Greece was called, and for want of which she failed to retain her political existence after Alexander, was hidden from the eyes of her sons by their wealth of rival ideals. It was eclipsed

Causes impeding the development of the City State into the Nation.

by the city as a star may be hid by a planet, the near and brilliant coming before the larger and more remote luminary. And then again it faded to the vision of that age in the dawn of a high mental culture, summed up in the word Hellenism. Thus the ideals both of the past and the future were hostile to the necessities of the present. The double rivalry is summed up in the claim of an Attic orator for his city. "Athens,"<sup>1</sup> says Isocrates—at once narrowing and expanding the ideal he sought to realise—"has made the name of Greek the attribute not of physical descent, but of spiritual community." The very fact that Hellenism was *concentrated* in Athens, that there was a more and less in the spirit of the Hellene, implied an expansion of the ideal beyond the limits of the actual Greece. The wide range afforded by the shores of the Mediterranean and the Euxine was all too narrow for the spiritual community opening to enfold the elect spirits of every race, but opening prematurely. No stage of evolution can be overleapt with impunity. Hellenism was, at that particular crisis, the foe of Hellas. Philip was by blood a Heracleid, by election a member of the Amphictyonic council; his rule over a barbaric nation seemed but the generalship of an allied army. As the King of Macedon he need not have been more dangerous than the King of Persia; as the descendant of Hercules he was the destroyer of Greek freedom.

Contem-  
poraneous  
emergence  
of pre-  
dominant  
individua-  
lity and  
tendency  
towards a  
national  
life.

The fact that the appeal of Isocrates, in preaching his hoped-for crusade, was to a possible general, is significant of a change that was coming upon the world, heralding man the unit in place of man the fragment. The Greek dread of individuality had been a shield against the dangers of Greek wealth. The student of Greek history tracks, along the precipice of personal eminence, the footsteps that slipped from its edge; he measures the height of achievement by the depth of a shattering fall. It would be no great exaggeration to say that almost every eminent

<sup>1</sup> *Panegyric*, 50.

Greek was either a martyr or a traitor; perhaps it was easier to an Athenian than it is to an Englishman to conceive that the same man might be both. Ostracism was as much a tribute as a penalty, and if an Aristides might be banished without discredit, so might a Socrates be put to death. Suspicion of the teaching which had produced Alcibiades and Critias was not unnatural. There may have been many who heard of that last pathetic scene in the prison with the same feeling which caused Schiller to declare that at the battle of Lützen the moment had come when Gustavus Adolphus could do his cause no better service than to die. And difficult as it is to a reader of Plato to conceive him one of them, it is almost as difficult to imagine any one who had disapproved of the death of Socrates, urging, as Plato does in his last dialogue,<sup>1</sup> that heresy should be a capital crime:—that the noblest thinker must accept the only form of ostracism possible if his predominance prove a threat to the integrity of the State.

The City State was not large enough to scorn the rivalry of an individual. But the time had come for a larger bond of union and a fuller development of the individual life which answers to it. About the time when Plato wrote *The Laws*, Aristotle was training the youth destined to conquer the world, and the father and equal of that conqueror was resisted not by a race or a city, but by a man. In the first great peril of Greece her defence had been the work of Athens and Sparta. In the second and fatal peril, it was Demosthenes who stood forth from the tumult of factions and cities, and with his eloquence almost welded them into a nation. But the man who stood against them had already inherited or created a nation, and the unity of a coming age must always be victorious over that which is passing away. The Greek citizen was blind to the perils and the possibilities of the change. If we can imagine an enthusiastic republican exhorting Napoleon,

Individual  
and Na-  
tional life  
emerge  
together

<sup>1</sup> Plato, *The Laws*, 909.

during the peace of Amiens, to a new crusade against monarchy, we shall have a modern type of the delusion of Isocrates in his appeal to Philip. It was indeed partly the result of the old Greek abhorrence of monarchy; it was quite impossible to a Greek whose ancestors had defeated Xerxes, to believe that Greece should ever be ruled by a monarch. But it was also in some degree a result of the ebb of that abhorrence. Isocrates had turned to more than one possible Napoleon<sup>1</sup> before he appealed to Philip. It seems a strange dream in looking back, to have supposed that Greece could at pleasure dismiss her victorious general at the head of a national army, but the dream shows how strong already was the vision of the nation, though it was so incomplete. The unity of the old world was at that time concentrating itself in a single mighty specimen which by the very fact that it hastened on to universal empire heralded a new form of society. The ancient city had the unity of a crystal; the modern nation has the unity of a plant. You may remove a branch from or insert a graft in a tree and only enrich what you have altered. To make any analogous attempt with a crystal is to destroy it. This comparison adumbrates the contrast of the political life of the world before and after Christ. If we say that that name implies here something more than a date we enter on disputable ground, yet the unquestionable fact that the earlier State was a City, and the latter a Nation, will be denied by few to be connected, as cause or effect, with some moral change. Let us pause a moment to return to this thought, already familiar to the reader who has followed us so far, for it needs restating in many forms, and is, when fully apprehended, one of the greatest moral lessons of history.

Slavery,  
the shadow  
of Greek  
Freedom.

A nation, we have seen, can never be a unity in the sense that the city was. That kind of unity needs for its existence a spirit of rigid exclusiveness. Freedom, in the

<sup>1</sup> As Dionysius I. of Syracuse, and Archidamus III., King of Sparta.

sense in which it was possessed by the citizen of antiquity, needed its contrast; the freeman implied the slave. Bondage was not comparable to a film on the crystal which might be wiped away; it was a condition of crystallisation. When the greatest philosopher of antiquity imagined a constitution for his ideal State—a State so far removed from actual experience that no mother in the governing class should know her own child—the only change he suggested in reference to slavery was that members of the Hellenic race should not inflict it on each other;<sup>1</sup> and this change, marking the furthest scope of his imaginative reform, was so far from being original that it had already been realised in practice by one of the Spartan generals of the Peloponnesian war.<sup>2</sup> Plato only conceived it possible to imagine, in his ideal city, such a modification of slavery as a fellow-Greek had already carried out (partially and inconsistently, it is true) amid the difficulties of actual warfare. Perhaps no other passage shows us so forcibly how deeply slavery had sent its roots into the heart of all ancient feeling.<sup>3</sup> The experience of the teacher, we should have thought, would have been no less suggestive than that of the soldier; the life of Socrates himself might surely have shown that it was possible for a man to lead the life of a freeman with hardly any recourse to the labour of slaves. But it was not so. Even to the enclosure of any practical sympathy it was a novelty to admit men who would not by any difference of language or appearance be distinguishable from fellow-citizens if they were not such; the rest of mankind being abandoned to conditions with the endurableness of which the Athenian refused to concern himself. Greek was not, in the ideal Greek city, to enslave Greek; the men who shared each other's language and religion were not to strip each

<sup>1</sup> *Republic*, 469.

<sup>2</sup> Callieratidna. See Xen. *Hellenica*, i. 6, 14.

<sup>3</sup> See also *The Laws*, 777, 778 μη προσπαίссονας μηδαμη μηδαμῶν οίκέταις, as one hears Englishmen nowadays say of Caffres, but as they would have to say of Welshmen and Scotchmen to present any parallel.



other of all that made life worth having; but this was all. And it is evident from the whole history of the time that to men reared in the atmosphere of slavery this was much.

Character  
of Greek  
slavery.

What was this atmosphere? According to some scholars nothing very oppressive. "The citizen at Athens," says the author of an admirable English treatise on the City State,<sup>1</sup> "had leisure to attend to his public duties, to educate himself for them, to enjoy himself at festivals and at the theatre, chiefly because he had at home and in his workshop a sufficient number of slaves to carry on his affairs in his absence. It need hardly be said that from all such education, public business, and enjoyment, the slave was most carefully excluded." But his condition, the writer thinks, was not otherwise grievous. "Though the disabilities of the Athenian slaves would form a long list, their discomforts were certainly few," adds Warde Fowler. A startling assertion, testifying almost as much as Plato's acceptance of slavery to the ease with which the sufferings of the dumb are forgotten. Let us consider the liabilities in circumstances by no means exceptional of persons as familiar to the Athenians as our housemaids or butlers are to us.

The slave  
in the Law  
Courts.

There can be no doubt that the most favoured class of slaves in antiquity was that occupied in the household of Athenian gentlemen. It is a case in which we hardly need evidence. When Warde Fowler says, "In no other State were slaves so materially comfortable," he asserts what every one feels pretty certain of from mere probabilities of the case, and it may well be that many an Athenian slave would not have changed places with many an English servant. But it is of these favoured specimens of the class that we learn their liability in perfect innocence to be visited with suffering an English judge would not and could not inflict on the worst criminal. Remember only that in every Athenian trial it was a suspicious circumstance not to offer

<sup>1</sup> W. Warde Fowler, 1895.

one's slaves for the rack. It does not appear, as far as the extant remains of forensic eloquence go, that in a single case the plaintiff or defendant to an action pleaded, "I cannot bear to have those tortured who have shared so much of my life." In one case, where the defendant,<sup>1</sup> a great banker, accused of fraudulent dealings with the depositor who brought the action, had been himself a slave, the reader can fancy that he discerns a reluctance which the hearers never seem to have imagined. Cittus (the slave) had been hidden by his master Pasion, the banker, and when he was discovered, and a demand was made for his torture, Pasion, according to his accuser (Isocrates), at first asserted that Cittus was a freeman. Subsequently, however, he consented to submit him to the question; but when they met for that purpose refused to allow torture to be applied. "Finding that his conduct *was blamed by every one*, he sought a private interview," &c. The idea never seems to have occurred to any one: "Perhaps after all a man who had himself been subject to the terror of the rack shrunk from inflicting it." Any reluctance on the part of the master was interpreted merely as a dread of a method of investigation regarded by the men of that age as the only means of legal discovery. "He withholds his slave from torture" was a stock indictment in Attic declamation. "What in the name of heaven," cries Isæus,<sup>2</sup> "are the guarantees of credibility for statements? Are they not witnesses? And what are the guarantees of credibility for a witness? Are they not tortures? Yes, and on what ground are the adversaries to be disbelieved? Is it not because they shrank from our tests? Assuredly. You see then that I am urging this inquiry and bringing it to the touch of proof; the plaintiff is shifting them to a basis of slanders and hearsays: precisely the course that would be taken by a grasping adventurer." In another cause the same advocate brings

<sup>1</sup> Isocrates, *Or.* xvii. Jebb, vol. ii. p. 224.

<sup>2</sup> Dionys. *Isæus*, 12.

forward the same plea in a case which to modern feeling exhibits with peculiar force the heartlessness of this demand. The claimant is a grandson, and according to his own view (apparently a just one), heir to the person whose property is in question; he must have been a child in the household of which he would consign the servants to the rack. Some aged nurse may have held the boy on her knees, some pedagogue guided his infant steps; it seems that no memory of such service rendered the thought of their sufferings intolerable. And yet here and there the uselessness of such suffering was as obvious to a Greek who witnessed as it is to every Englishman who hears of it. "Of course," says another advocate<sup>2</sup> (Antiphon), defending a person accused of murder, "a tortured slave always says what will please his torturers. Before the torture the slave said that the accused person was innocent, and also after it; it was only under the actual pressure of the rack that he declared him guilty. The slave was in spite of this put to death so as to prevent the accused person from torturing him also." The execution of the slave it seems was illegal, but in view of all else we know it would appear that the illegality consisted rather in the loss to the master than the murder itself. When Warde Fowler speaks lightly of the sufferings of Athenian slaves he is for the moment taking the Athenian point of view; he has been, we may say, naturalised at Athens. The passages cited here are perfectly familiar; they are a mere specimen of the evidence; yet a student of Attic literature can forget them all, and speak of the "discomforts" of an Athenian slave as trifling! It is a striking instance of the weakness of imagination and the power of eloquent words.

Influence  
of slavery  
on the  
position of  
aliens:

The influence of slavery, or rather that conception of Freedom as privilege which makes slavery possible, must always extend far beyond the relation of master and slave. The fact being accepted that only some men should have rights, it followed naturally that rights should be restricted

<sup>1</sup> Antiphon, *De cæde Herodis*, § 29-51. Jebb, i. p. 59.

even where all right is not withheld. If we could have been transported to the streets of Athens, says a scholar,<sup>1</sup> nothing probably would have more surprised us than the abundance of Oriental and Barbarian elements in the population, and of course these were far from exhausting the non-citizen population, among the Hellenic portion of which we find such distinguished names as Herodotus and Aristotle. There are no doubt such persons in England as resident aliens, but the powers which an Englishman possesses and an alien does not can be acquired by any resident through a mere formality, and do not include anything important to average mankind. An illiterate foreigner executed (April 7, 1903) for a peculiarly atrocious murder, the victim being an Englishwoman, had as careful a defence as that accorded to any other murderer. The cautious but pregnant phrase of Demosthenes,<sup>2</sup> "It is not credible that a foreigner should be unjustly favoured," suggests a very different position for an alien at Athens. The immunities and the privileges of the citizen had to be guarded with growing exclusiveness. The strict law of Athenian citizenship B.C. 451 would have disfranchised Themistocles; Herodotus would probably have remained at Athens if he could have obtained the citizenship. Lysias the orator was deprived of it by a mere quibble, Aristotle never possessed it. The citizen was a member of Parliament; he naturally guarded his privilege rigidly. Its indefinite extension would have been equivalent to an abolition of its value for those who already possessed it.

Wherever slavery exists, it must not only form the mould of subordination and supply the associations of authority, but largely colour the feeling with which men regard work. The artisan and commercial classes, in Greek society, were attracted by its neighbourhood into an atmosphere of de-

and on the whole artisan class.

<sup>1</sup> Newman, *Introduction to the Politics of Aristotle*.

<sup>2</sup> In the speech composed by him for Apollodorus, son of Pasion the banker, against Callippus, Dem. 1243.

gradation. Labour was servile; its associations carried the mind towards a life of bondage. "There is nothing disgraceful in work," says Hesiod, but the words are rather a protest against than an expression of Greek feeling. A disciple of Socrates, destined to a baleful fame in the history of his country, is made by Plato to quote the words with a comment strikingly illustrative of the feeling they would deprecate. "Hesiod tells us," says the Platonic Critias,<sup>1</sup> "that there is no disgrace in work, but of course he was not thinking of such work as a shoemaker's or a grocer's." It is a curious expression in the mouth of a disciple of Socrates, for his illustrations were apt to be drawn from just such tradesman's work, and the modern reader can hardly help infusing into it, rightly or wrongly, something of that scorn for average humanity which prepares the tyrant. Socrates, however, seems to acquiesce in his disciple's exclusiveness. The hatred of labour was stamped on the very structure of Greek language; labour and pain are denoted in it by the same word; and for industry there is no Greek expression whatever. We need not here, as in India, think of the associations of climate; this distaste for work is explicable from the instincts and the circumstances of a Greek. The modern writer<sup>2</sup> of a charming essay has described an enthusiastic youth, fresh from college and full of projects of social reform, taking the place of a ploughman for the length of one furrow in order to test his theories of combined culture and hard work, and the changed aspect of these theories as he resigns the share to the puzzled countryman, and tries to imagine himself sitting down to study after a few hours of such exertion. The passage leaves on the reader's mind the impression of a fragment of actual experience. For average minds, and many that are above the average, hard bodily exertion is incompatible with intellectual culture, except so far as the last is carefully apportioned to

<sup>1</sup> Plato, *Charmides*, 163.

<sup>2</sup> William Smith, author of *Thorndale*.



the needs of the first, as in Greek gymnastic. And the contempt for labour, of course, concentrated on physical exertion, was not confined to it. Even a rich man like Pasion, the Coutts of Athens, as we may call him, though he did at last succeed in being made a citizen, was apparently looked down upon for his occupation. All exertion that was not purely intellectual or directly political was felt at Athens a mere hindrance to the real objects of life. Englishmen find it very flat to lose the keen interest of Parliamentary life when once they have felt it, but they know that it is quite possible for a man to lead the life of a gentleman in the best sense of the word without taking any share in the work of legislation; while the loss of this interest deprived an Athenian of all that made life worth living. The extent of the change is hidden from us by its very completeness. Modern democracy has come to focus its attention upon those very classes to which ancient democracy gave no attention at all. Those men who live by their own exertions must be, if discontented, the largest source of national danger, and are therefore perforce the main object of national care. The City State could despise their discontent. The lower unity is thus more stable than the higher. Hence the blindness of modern scholars to miseries which they cannot conceive as being tolerated by the contemporaries of Socrates and Sophocles.

The development of industrial and commercial life on the one hand, and that of representative government on the other, have changed all the associations of labour in modern Europe. A duke's son in England engages in employment that an Athenian would have thought disgraceful for any freeman; while those who would at Athens hardly have ranked as freemen, assist in the nomination of the legislative. We must empty in imagination the chasm which has thus been filled up if we would understand the ancient contempt for labour. It is the foremost thinkers of Greece who formulate, in its

Greek  
scorn for  
toil.

hardest distinctness, that scorn for the artisan class which implies that it was virtually enslaved. The artisan, Plato<sup>1</sup> tells us, must be taught that they differ from the true freemen of a city as wood differs from gold. "The artisan," says Aristotle,<sup>2</sup> "only partakes of virtue so far as he partakes of slavery." They both felt that civil life in the true sense of the word must be something exceptional. It would be a gain that the artisan class should be reduced to slavery, inasmuch as the free labourers seemed a specimen of that chaotic condition which showed what all society would be if a share in freedom ceased to mean a share in government. The slave stood closer to civil life than the artisan, since he belonged to a governing family, and in some sense, therefore, must be considered more of a participant in the blessing of freedom. For those who, by the decrees of nature, were shut out from taking a share in government, the next best thing was to be fully and entirely its objects.

Modern  
Freedom,  
the right  
of all.  
Ancient  
Freedom,  
the privi-  
lege of  
some.

It may perhaps be urged that an account of some sad features in our own civilisation would lessen the contrast presented here. But this will be true only if we forget the difference between reluctant practical acquiescence and incorporation in an ideal. When Disraeli called the rich and the poor the two nations, he pointed out a blot on our civilisation which all reformers desire to remove. But when Socrates is made by Plato to use the same language about the "two States"<sup>3</sup> he refers to a division which his ideal was to exaggerate and perpetuate. People who know Plato only by repute are apt to imagine that the regulations as to women and children, which are all that they know about his *Republic*, apply to the bulk of his citizens. It is a natural mistake, and one which a

<sup>1</sup> *Republic*, 414, 415.

<sup>2</sup> *Politics*, 1260a.

<sup>3</sup> *Republic*, 422-423. He thought that his city was to get rid of this dualism, but his pupil has all readers with him when he remarks that there would be two States in Plato's *Republic*. ~~Aristotle, *Politics*, 1260a.~~

hasty perusal of the *Republic* does not remove. The truth is, that Plato took so very little interest in average citizens that we may almost forget their existence when we are considering his political ideas. The bulk of his commonwealth must, like any other, have been made up of those employed in the hard, prosaic work of life; and as he himself reminds us, every single class among his artisans and mechanics must have outnumbered the class of the guardians many times over. And yet when Socrates seems to be speaking of the citizens, we find that he always has in mind the rulers - the aristocracy, as we should best name them, if we wanted to keep in mind their relative proportion to the rest. The habit of mind engendered by slavery made it easy for him to ignore average mankind to an extent that a modern finds it difficult even to remember. The artisans, the agriculturists, the mechanics, who would make up the average body of citizens, are in the *Republic* absorbed into that vast atmosphere of slavery, which encircles the life of the city. To all intents and purposes they are slaves. They have no share in the government; they are merely subjects of rule. The guardians, whose necessities they are obliged to supply, and whose decisions they have no power of influencing, are self-denying persons, devoted to the welfare of the State; and in our modern sense they may be regarded as less free than any other class, for those oppressive regulations which Plato had adapted from the discipline of Lycurgus apply to them alone. Still their rule is absolute. The rest of the citizens, we must presume, are to be allowed all enjoyments compatible with entire subjection, but we hear almost nothing about them. They stand side by side with the true citizens as aliens do, and thus constitute a sort of rival State, which had little interest for the philosophic thinker, but in which the modern politician finds the main object of his care. The moral insignificance, in a mind like Plato's, of the whole artisan class, exhibits

the contagion of slavery more effectively than any severe regulations for the repression of slaves. No cleft is so deep as that between men who are and are not worth the trouble of discipline.

Alteration  
in the  
meaning of  
the word  
Freedom.

This shifting of the moral centre of gravity has affected every department of our moral being, and even much which in the narrower sense of the word we should not call moral. It is discernible in the different meaning of a word which denotes the largest object of human desire. At all times a man must dislike being prevented from doing what he chooses to do; that is merely saying twice over that he chooses to do it, but the things men choose most passionately vary from age to age, and we might almost say that what was freedom in Greece would be felt in England as bondage. The Lacedemonian rule was a system of minute regulation of private life, such as Englishmen would submit to for a sufficient reason, but in no circumstances call Liberty. A Spartan not only felt that it was Liberty, but that it would so be considered by every one who had any experience of it. When Sparthias and Bulis<sup>1</sup> went to the court of Xerxes to offer up their lives for their city, a Persian noble, vividly impressed by such an example of fearless self-devotion, tried to win them to his master's service. "Why avoid the friendship of the great King, gentlemen? He, knowing how to honour merit, would make each of you a Greek governor." "Hydarnes," was their reply (Herodotus does not decide on the individual speaker), "you take upon yourself to advise between alternatives of which one is unknown to you, and to advise slavery, knowing only the condition of a slave. Had you tasted the sweets of Liberty you would, before submission, have gone to all extremities in its defence." We are obliged to translate *ἐλευθερία* liberty: there is no other word that would approach the meaning Herodotus is trying to convey. But if we suppose Liberty to mean a life led in

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 140.

accordance with individual choice, then Hydarnes had probably a great deal more of it than Sperthias or Bulis. He could retain a childless wife, or bring up a sickly child; they could do neither. The Spartan discipline was a far greater interference with private freedom than anything known to a Persian governor, or indeed any Persian apart from the exigencies of warfare or taxation.

The consciousness of participation in national action and the consciousness of private independence approximately correspond to the ancient and modern ideas of liberty respectively. According to the ancient idea, Hydarnes would have remained a slave even if the Persian king had become a passionate philanthropist; Sperthias would have remained a free man, though his sacrifice had been compulsory. Freedom meant conformity to the ideal intentions of citizens, it referred to a power within the State to realise what they at their best and highest sought to embody in practical working; and by their best and highest we must always understand that mood which most exclusively contemplated the life of the State.

There is, no doubt, at the opening of this twentieth century of our era, a tendency to revert to the ancient ideal of liberty. For the moment it seems stronger than it is. It is, in fact, fenced off from the ancient view by the impregnable barrier which separates the selective standard of antiquity from the collective standard of modern life. Freedom, according to the former view, was not, could not be a good for humanity. Behind the citizen, there must be the alien and the slave, ready to undertake the work which set free the citizen for the business of governing his country. The question therefore was not—Why should such a one remain excluded from the rights of citizenship? but—Why should he be endowed with it? Hence the growing exclusiveness of civil feeling; hence the bristling entrenchments which held the non-civil world at bay. Great orators could fling out taunts against the birth of their opponent's mother with

The  
modern  
return  
towards  
this ideal  
delusive.



the indignation which could on modern lips be professed only with regard to crime; and the presence of what in English could be described only as incredible vulgarity is associated in Greek with immortal eloquence. Great historians could visit the city whose glory they had celebrated, and find no inducement in an offered naturalisation to make it their home. Rich bankers could plead that they had to carry on a trade admitted to be necessary to the city under all the disadvantages of a lack of civil right. And beyond all these lay the slave world—the men whose place is taken in our constitution by the “working classes.” They are the classes whose welfare chiefly occupies the attention of modern statesmen, but whose representatives in ancient life had hardly the rights of animals in modern England. So potent is the influence of the ancient idea that our dialect is still moulded by it. We cannot speak of “the franchise” without reverting to a view which identified freedom and government, and hence it is possible to blur the modern feeling by that confusion of one good thing with another good thing, which is the favourite device of Rhetoric, and to Logic a deadly foe. That movement by which public feeling has of late widened and deepened its conception of State duty has brought political theory somewhat nearer in appearance to the conceptions of Plato and Aristotle than that which appeared a generation ago the stable assumption of modern life; but it can never return to the limitations of State interest which made the antique ideal a practical possibility. The progress of Evolution is a spiral. We turn to the west and the east alternately, and leave behind us nothing towards which we do not seem at some time to approach again. We are in our day taking up many of the duties recognised by the ancient, and till lately repudiated by the modern State, but if we can make any unhesitating prophecy whatever as to the future, it is that we shall never revert to the selective standard of antiquity. Sympathy may include diverse

elements, but any contraction of its area is, so far as we may ever use the word with reference to a moral future, impossible.

We cannot imagine ancient society without slavery, but we can see how the black shadow thereby cast on Greek life obscured its own characteristic principle, and may accept the belief that Greece failed of her ideal unity because, in preferring the symmetry of the crystal to the life of the plant, she not only resisted the law of evolution, but was also faithless to the inner meaning of her own special message to the world. In the world of thought she remains for ever the exponent of the dramatic principle in human life, the spirit that is always ready to invert its assumptions, to see the other side. In the world of history we see her clutching the hard narrow separateness of city life, and refusing the catholic breadth of a Nation. Perhaps it was inevitable. To give up the exclusive for the expansive unity at that epoch in the world's history would have implied something of prophetic insight, such as does indeed flash from the utterance of isolated thinkers, but could not be embodied in the creed of a people. A true harmony of opposites would always supply some vision of the future, some hold on those spiritual laws which the events of Time illustrate, and cannot change. But to cast aside the narrowness of city life, to feel that a citizen of Athens or Sparta, Argos or Thebes, was primarily a Greek, would have been for the ordinary man of that day almost as great a moral transformation as to see that man had no right to enslave man. And yet the Greek ideal seems to demand the unity of the Greek race in a nation, and some view of humanity that should at least confer rights on the slave. For want of some adjustment between the spirit of elastic and reversible sympathy which was the life-blood of Hellenic thought, and the hard and narrow framework supplied by the City State of antiquity, Greece perished; from the suppression of the first element Rome survived.

The collective cannot attain the strength of the selective ideal.

## CHAPTER V

### ROME AND THE REIGN OF LAW

Greek  
wealth is  
connected  
with its  
short inde-  
pendent  
life.

GREECE combined the political standard of antiquity with a wealth of various development foreshadowing modern Europe. It adhered steadily and passionately to the life of the City State, but its rich genius opened on opposite sides doors for the enemies of this form of political society; on the one hand bringing out individual life into threatening predominance, and on the other confusing the unity of the city by suggesting the unity of the race. Greece thus, anticipating both the individual and, to some degree, the national life that belongs to the modern world, seems to realise the saying of Montaigne—"Malheur a celui qui est en avance de son siècle!" It shows the swift decay that follows so often on premature development. Of that brilliant blossoming time of humanity we may say, if we measure it by the lifetime of nations, that it was

"Momentary as a sound,  
Swift as a shadow, short as any dream;  
Brief as the lightning in the collied night  
That in a spleen unfolds both heaven and earth,  
And ere a man hath power to say, Behold!  
The jaws of darkness do devour it up.  
So quick bright things come to confusion."<sup>1</sup>

Three long lives would include the whole of that period of "bright things," which has left the trace of its lustre so deeply impressed on the thought and imagination of all subsequent ages that we are apt to forget how transitory it was as an actual fact. The genius of ancient life led towards

<sup>1</sup> *Midsummer Night's Dream.*

a view of national relations in which every member was either hammer or anvil; and the common life of a group of States refusing any consistent acceptance or rejection of this view was necessarily transient.

It is in the power contrasted with Greece as the oak of a century is contrasted with the lily of a day, that we find the ideal of inequality and exclusiveness, which makes up the moral code of antiquity, worked out consistently and logically. The master and slave view of human life colours not only the individual relations, but the national ideal of the Roman. Here are no Athens and Sparta; here is no community of kindred States among which rivalry is possible and union conceivable. There was no ancient Italy in the sense that there was an ancient Greece; if we compare Rome with Athens we have no possible analogue for Sparta or Thebes. And then, again, Rome has no personal interest; the Roman character is monotonous, prosaic, intellectually commonplace, wanting in vividness and individuality. All the interest of Roman history lies in its victims; the only striking figure it shows us, till we reach the threshold of the modern world, is that of Rome's heroic foe, shattered in the attempt to save his country from being pulverised beneath her tread. Not till the close of what was felt the very life of Rome could we single out any figure to match the numerous striking personalities of Greek history. The ordinary reader, before reaching Cicero and Cæsar, has hardly any definite impression of an individual Roman. The vivid, lovable, and eminently modern character of Cicero, with all its dramatic inconsistency, its naïve egoism, its engaging confidences, haunts the imagination of any reader of Latin till he unconsciously multiplies so expansive a personality, and makes him a specimen of that Roman life of which he marked the conclusion, and in which we cannot find him a brother. It is a double blunder. Cicero is hardly a Roman, and among Romans he stands alone. He is a Londoner or Parisian born too soon; he is an Athenian born too late; he

Roman  
poverty  
with the  
perman-  
ence of  
Rome.

is a Roman as an English Liberal may be a Roman Catholic. That may seem an unsuitable parallel, because no doubt his devotion to the Roman Republic was a much more passionate feeling than any we can imagine an English Liberal entertaining for the Roman Church, but we must stretch our imagination to take in a deadly Protestant persecution and impending Catholic ruin before we can complete the comparison. And we may say that Cicero, in every allusion to the murder of Cæsar, manifests a kind of quasi-religious fanaticism in which we feel that our friend—surely Cicero is the friend of every reader of his letters—is submerged. He is fanatically, but not characteristically, a Roman. And then, too, in another sense, he is the last Roman citizen, he illumines a society which begins and ends with himself. When we have named him and one or two of his contemporaries we have almost ended the short list of the vivid personalities of Rome.

As opening  
no distraction  
from  
the life of  
the City  
State.

We may say, then, that on the one hand no impressive individuals and on the other no potential nation appear to dispute and confuse the pre-eminence of the despot City. It stands in its bare keen outline the consummation and the explanation of ancient life; it accepts consistently and logically the theory, on which ancient society is based, that the majority of the human race exists for the sake of a small minority; it carries out this ideal of the old world in all its naked exclusiveness. As we turn from the variety, the dramatic effectiveness, the light and shade, the strong individuality of Greek history, to the monotonous onward march of that in which it is swallowed up, we recognise that here the life of antiquity reaches its maturity. The hesitation of a rich ideal is past, the unity of the city is consistently recognised as the only basis of right.

The comparison of  
the two  
suggests an  
ebb in the  
progress of  
the race.

The exchange may appear a retrogression. If the political state of the early world was a city, and the political state of the modern world is a nation, we should expect the approach towards historic maturity to be shown



in national development. The very opposite is the fact. Greece, in her later history, comes very near being a nation. The Achaian League supplied the framework and the constitution for a national Greece; in Aratus we have almost its first modern king,<sup>1</sup> and the loyalty which his extraordinary blunders could not shake is unlike any previous feeling in Greek history. Whether we call him the first President of United States or the first King of Greece, we should equally describe the aspect which he presents to a reader sufficiently imaginative to connect him with the history which he seems appropriately to announce, in either case connecting him with modern history. Polybius, the biographer of Aratus, narrates the fall of Greece; and our latest English historian of Greece<sup>2</sup> refused to concern himself with the history of the Achaian League, thus justifying English readers in their ignorance of it. As regards the lessons to be derived from history this is a great loss. The Greece of Polybius, says Freeman, is richer in various instruction than is the Greece of Thucydides. It presents us with the picture of a people struggling on the very edge of representative government, a nation, we may say, ready to be born. Nevertheless one feels somehow that the history of Greece is more complete without its instructive and important epilogue. Achaian Greece seems rather modern Greece awakened too soon than ancient Greece awake late. It belongs rather to Roman than Greek history; we think of it as already a province of the mighty empire then like a rising tide engulfing the world. The Greek nation hardly breathed before it sunk into that death-like slumber of two millenniums from which it is only emerging at the present day.

As we turn from Greece to Rome we exchange June for December. We quit wealth for poverty, variety for

Such ebt.  
and flow  
forms the  
rhythm of  
Evolution.

<sup>1</sup> See Freeman's *History of Federal Government*, a work which admirably transcribes, for the English reader, the History of Polybius.

<sup>2</sup> See Grote, Preface, pp. xv and xvi.

## THE MORAL IDEAL

monotony, the play of balanced life for the onward march of relentless force and the successive crushing of all forms of independent life. Between the life of the City and the life of the Nation intervenes a dominion which seems to miss the wealth of both, and ages intervene before we reach that national life which Greece foreshadowed and Rome obliterates. The crystal of city life is shattered and the rich growth of national development is arrested. Greece seems to hurry us on to England, to France, to Germany. Rome drops the curtain on all. Under her monotonous progress we seem much further from any modern ideas than we were at the very beginning of that brief, prophetic, exuberant prologue to continuous history. But her poverty is her strength. She interprets to us, with the force of simplicity, the ideal of the early world, in all its hardness, its ruthlessness, its exclusiveness, and also with all that strength which is gained wherever these qualities are present in such completeness as to exclude the protest of conscience and the distraction of doubt.

Distinction  
of the  
ancient  
and the  
modern  
moral  
ideal.

The grandeur of the classical world, Greek or Roman, depends on a sense of corporate unity, which appears to the modern intelligence the goal of eminent goodness rather than the possible assumption of average practical life. We hardly reach with much effort that sense of the value of organic corporate life which the citizen of antiquity could not lose. Among us it would require exalted virtue to make the tribe or the nation the starting-point of thought, as it must have been the starting-point of thought to an average Athenian or Roman. The object of conservation to him was a set of groups; the individual was a fraction of one or more of these groups, not an entity that could be considered alone. The unity of the State was preserved by relegating the most difficult perplexities of modern life to a region with which the State refused to concern itself. It is impossible for any modern nation to attain this antique unity. If we ever make the effort

we are hindered as much by our virtues as by our vices; we are neither good enough nor bad enough for the thing we are trying to do. At our best we cannot so surrender our own claims; at our worst we cannot so trample on those of others. The fact that a Greek or Roman saw all liberty against a background of slavery is as important as the fact that he meant by liberty no mere immunity from interference, but an actual share in a dominant corporation which preceded and would survive him. Here are the strength and the weakness of the antique ideal side by side. The Greek or Roman was better than the modern Englishman, so far as he was vitally the member of a commonwealth. He was worse so far as he was the member of a dominant caste. It was no proof of exalted virtue in him to merge his own interests in those of his country to an extent which would require exalted virtue now; but neither was indifference to all interest not included in this dominant claim a proof of exceptional hardness of heart as it would be with us. The best among the ancients disregarded the ills of all outside a certain enclosure as the ills of others are in our day disregarded only by the pre-eminently selfish; but they aimed at the welfare of all inside that enclosure as in our day only the unselfish aim at any welfare but their own.

This is true, on the whole, of Greece. But no such statement can be absolutely true of that rich, various, prophetic race, the originator of all we think, the standard of all we imagine. We could find many a sentence in Greek which seemingly protests against anything so exclusive as what has just been said, and can only repeat that nevertheless it is true on the whole. When we turn to Rome we may say that it is true absolutely. For the whole classic world Freedom was the privilege of some, not the right of all, but till we reach Rome we have no political framework entirely harmonious with this idea. A group of many cities could hardly accept with a whole heart

The ancient ideal was held consistently only by Rome.

and conscience the master-and-slave view of humanity as an ideal. The world of *one* city accepted it consistently and logically. Here in that civilisation, under the shadow of which we must look for the origin of ours, the belief that some men exist for the sake of other men is worked out in its hardest distinctness. Rome is to rule the world, and Romans alone are truly free. Greece, with its wealth of relations, hesitated between the unity of the city and of the nation, and perished in the struggle. Rome, in its meagre and monotonous development, is free from all such perplexity; it embodied the ideal, abhorred by Greece, of the despot city, and thus gave the world a centre.

which thus  
starts the  
consecutive  
march of  
History,

It is thus prosaic and monotonous Rome, not poetic and various Greece, which, in an important sense of the word, starts the history of Europe. Greece belongs to that impressive prologue to history which begins with Persia; the continuous narrative begins only with the city on the Tiber. "The centre of our studies, the goal of our thoughts, the point to which all paths lead and the point from which all paths start again," says a Regius Professor of Modern History addressing his class at Oxford in 1885, "is to be found in Rome and her abiding power."<sup>1</sup> If there be a touch of exaggeration here it need not blind us to an impressive fact. The cities of Greece, like the nations of Europe, were the occupants of a common platform, from which they looked down on the barbarian world, and within which each member felt himself bound to his fellows by the close and indestructible ties of a common race, but within which they recognised no central authority. Its life must be regarded as a sort of condensed rehearsal of modern European history before the stage was cleared for the continuous and still unfinished drama. When the rehearsal comes to an end the immediate effect is a sense of loss. The history of Greece is the most interesting chapter in the biography of our race; the history of Rome, so far as that is

<sup>1</sup> Freeman, *Chief Periods of Roman History*.

possible to a series of important events, would be allowed by most readers to be one of the least interesting. Yet the arid, prosaic narrative is a part of history in a sense that the vivid drama is not. It would be conceivably possible to know the outward development of the modern world thoroughly, and to be unaware that Greece had existed. We should thus drop the most illustrious associations of the word Freedom; we should be ignorant of hidden springs whence we quaff perennial refreshment; but in the external sequence of cause and effect we should not be at a loss. Greece blossomed into a sudden wealth of life and beauty, withered as suddenly, and dropping a hundred seeds into the bosom of all art and all thought, passed away, leaving no heir in the life of nations. Rome, on the other hand, lived its hard, narrow, prosaic life as a member of the genealogy of modern Europe. If we omit that life History becomes inexplicable. The idea of a philosophy of history first emerges in the conception of a Fortune of Rome.<sup>1</sup> The expression is almost copied from the Greek historian, who tells us that he began his history from the assured predominance of Rome because this is the very start of all he understands by history. Before that time he could discern only a desultory narrative of unconnected events; after it history assumes "an entire and perfect body,"<sup>2</sup> to which the Empire State has supplied a heart. All events take a new meaning in their relation to the goal which then appears for the first time. Other nations have "had their day and ceased to be"; they are episodes in the biography of the race. But Rome, when she has ceased to exist as a ruling power, remains as an ancestral reminiscence; she bequeathed to the world the mould of government, and the framework of a Church.

When we quit the history of Greece for that of Rome, however grievously we feel the exchange of Greek variety

giving the  
world an  
organic  
unity

<sup>1</sup> See Plutarch, *De Fortuna Romanorum*, *passim*.

<sup>2</sup> σωματικὴ συνβαίνει γίνεσθαι τὴν ἱστορίαν (Polybius, i. 3).



for Roman monotony and the consequent receding from our various modern European life, we do yet recognise one circumstance present in modern life and lacking utterly to Greece—we find for the first time a theory of international relation. It is indeed a very simple one; graduated subordination is the only position in which the various States of the world can stand towards Rome. But the very conception of graduated subordination<sup>1</sup> was, in germ, international. It is significant that we are obliged to use that word in speaking of a civilisation which recognised no nations. We speak of a civil war, but we cannot speak of “intercivil relations.” There was no code between city and city. *The* city, on the other hand, could not but recognise different degrees of right in her numerous and various subjects. With Rome Europe has for the first time an organisation. Greece divides the world into Greeks and barbarians. Rome, by the very fact that she belongs to the barbarian world, is driven to a more complex view of humanity. She cannot simply take up the Greek view and turn out the Greeks from their platform in order to occupy it herself. In the first place, a city cannot take the place of a group of cities; in the second place, Greece was to Rome a Holy Land. The voice which pronounced it the destiny of Rome to organise her imperial rule and bind the nations in her sway,<sup>1</sup> also reminded her that for instruction in the arts she most admired she must look to her subjects. The arrogance of Greece prevented a similar arrogance on the part of her conqueror; the power by which she was subdued recognised her spiritual dominion, and by the mere fact of that recognition dropped the distinction by which she had relegated the majority of the human race to a position of generic difference. It was impossible to Romans to carry on with non-Romans a distinction which modern Europeans best represent to themselves by recalling their own temptations towards the

<sup>1</sup> Virgil, *Æneid*, vi. 848–852.

coloured races. Certainly they were not less cruel than Greeks, probably they were even more remote from the average sense of humanity in Christianised Europe, but they could not copy Greek contempt of the barbaric world without including themselves or their teachers, and the last was as impossible as the first. Thus they were driven to what we may call a modern position; they recognised degrees of subjection, and thus established in a rudimentary form some kind of extra-civil relation, prefiguring the modern life of nations, and gradually developing into their great bequest to Europe - a law which, while based on privilege, prepared the recognition and expansion of the idea of right.

Roman law, in its narrowest sense, the civil law of Rome, was a consecration of all that is exclusive; it was the spirit that is willing to inhabit a paradise "haunted by shrieks of far-off misery." On the other hand, the "law of nations," the law by which justice was administered to the subjects of Rome, was the nurse of a liberal justice, the mould of a high morality, the philosophic teacher of political wisdom and guardian of national life. It supplied to all the countries beneath Roman rule a pattern of righteous dealing between the governors and governed; a pattern, indeed, which its administrators neglected or defied, but which none the less remained as a rebuke to their injustice and a goal of all true efforts to carry out the ideal dominion of Rome. And it included within its impartial embrace the whole civilised world. An Athenian obeyed a law that many who spoke his own tongue regarded as a thing external to any loyalty of theirs. The law of the Romans had all the universality of a law of Nature, and perhaps we should never have had the latter expression if there had not existed a State which possessed a realm so wide and a sway so irresistible, that its laws gained the association of natural powers, and passed in that form into their type. When we read St. Paul's Epistle to the dwellers

The double  
element in  
Roman  
law

in Rome, we may feel throughout that the law he was consciously referring to was the Jewish law, and at the same time recognise an influence on his whole range of thought proceeding from the atmosphere of Roman law surrounding those he addressed. The very spirit of hesitation as to the exact meaning of law in his writings bears witness to this atmosphere. It seems insensibly to mingle with and as it were dilute the ideas of Jewish law on which the writer is consciously dwelling. The Jew of Tarsus, addressing the Christians of Rome, gathers up into one whole the varied ideas of law spread throughout the world, and brings them back to the pure and abstract conception of an ideal law. He leads his correspondents towards that junction of the law within and the law without for which some preparation is made whenever the laws of different races are brought into any coherent relation, thus emphasising and objectivising that desire for justice which in his own case is felt by every one.

Roman law  
prepares  
the way for  
Christian  
orthodoxy.

Hence we may say of Roman rule that it is in an important, though a narrow sense, a preparation for monotheism. All that it suggests or proclaims tends towards unity. It was the unity of power, not of love, and as such seems barren beside the deeper unity which, in the adherents of Christ, Rome sought to annihilate. But we may also say that the antagonism of Rome to Christianity embodied the fear of a rival. Submission to the will of Rome had something in common with submission to the will of God. The rule of Rome was rarely moral; it was sometimes profoundly immoral. Nevertheless its irresistible onward march roused a profound feeling of resignation when once it obtained any submission at all. That state of which the assured predominance was the central fact in the world's history might claim from its subjects an obedience in which there was nothing base. "The Carthaginians at the moment of their fall perished from the earth, but the Greeks look on at their own

calamities,"<sup>1</sup> exclaims a Greek, with a sense of envy, it would appear, for the victim of Rome whose fate was that of more absolute annihilation. Yet when Polybius speaks of the conqueror of Greece as the favourite of Providence, the expression is neither a mere flight of rhetoric nor a piece of abject flattery, but a simple summing up in a few words of the impression made by the records he had set himself to interpret. The Fortune of Rome was for him no partial goddess, though she had set her inexorable decree against his own country, but a being in whose predominance there was a claim to allegiance swallowing up even the claim of patriotism; a State marked by indications of Divine care so definite and overwhelming, that the duty of submission to its sway was a part of the duty of submission to Heaven. It was, no doubt, primarily submission to irresistible despotism. But all despotism is more tolerable when it is strong and steady. Tyranny is usually a fitful thing; we hardly remember how much easier it is to bear when it is perfectly stable. There was something in the very completeness of Roman conquests that, to a certain extent, softened the evil of conquest. If freedom be the first blessing of a State, surely the second is subordination to a conqueror who rules the world. The subject thus escapes the cruelty springing from fear, that is, the larger part of all cruelty.

The progress of a conquering nation to the rule of the world, the gradual attraction to itself of all power, the evolution, as it were, of the central idea of history—all this supplied the rule of Rome with potent and subtle allies, captivating to the imagination, enthralling to the intellect, even of those whose national life it crushed. The desire for unity is so deep in the human heart that even in what is arduous and trying, the sense of a plan, a meaning, brings with it a large alleviation. It cannot overcome the intensity of vivid individual desire; it cannot

The influence of vast and enduring power

<sup>1</sup> Polybius, xxxviii. 14 (Didot).

allay the fever of anguish or melt the ice of a hard despair. But in all ordinary human trials it will be found that there is a wonderful influence in the contemplation of a large enduring reality, the sense of a link with the past and the future, the neighbourhood of what is impressive and permanent. It may exist where there is no love, no justice, no moral nobility, and yet keep its own steady, persistent claim; it overcomes weak resistance, and there is more weak than strong resistance in the world.

Its blank of  
character  
and uni-  
formity of  
purpose  
suggests  
super-  
human  
design.

We need to remember this in following the history of Rome. Her sway is insufficiently explained by the valour of her sons; their success suggests some supernatural influence seconding their patriotism by a hostile demeanour to every foe of their country, and neutralising alike the power of genius and of numbers, when they combined against the elect city. The connection of such a State with Divine influence is visible from the first; a mysterious power hovering over the small spot of earth hemmed in by so great a multitude of enemies seems necessary to explain its triumph over all. And the impressiveness of such a connection is brought home to us at the close of ancient life, when the greatness of Rome seemed passed, and the mighty fabric tottering to its fall. Then it was that the seer in Patmos preparing in imagination for the destruction of the harlot city found delay explicable only as a Divine appointment, enchainning the spirits of the subject kings (the provincial governors) and forcing them into submission to the expected Nero. "God did put in their hearts to do his mind and to come to one mind, and to give their kingdom unto the beast until the words of God should be accomplished."<sup>1</sup> The anticipation must have been felt often throughout the history of the detested power; we see again and again the sense of a coming deliverance tremble through the nations and a vast disappointment as the avalanche melts and the rock remains. But the disappointment passes into acquiescence. Hannibal

<sup>1</sup> Revelation xvii. 17.



was brought to seek peace by being taught to distrust the fortune of his race, "seeing how she sports with us as with children;"<sup>1</sup> but Cæsar could encourage his soldiers in their hour of despondency by urging them to trust in his fortune no less than in his prowess,<sup>2</sup> and the dagger of the assassin could not confute a trust commemorated in the establishment of the Empire. The Fortune of Hannibal shows us the fitful gleam accorded to the adversary of Rome, as the Fortune of Cæsar shows us the steady blaze shed on its representative. The historian who reviewed the progress of Rome from its summit discovered in it a harmony of the colossal and the minute which bore witness to the all-inclusive character of the supernatural power to which it was due. The genius of Rome seemed to Plutarch<sup>3</sup> to watch over the smallest events with unfaltering vigilance and over the greatest with unimpaired power. By him the death of Alexander and the cackling of geese in the Capitol were equally regarded as links in the mighty chain. In his eyes the premature close of the greatest earthly career was not more distinctly foreordained with a view to the protection of the State which that career might have overshadowed, than was the hiss of frightened fowl, preserving the city from enemies more numerous but less formidable. Rome is in fact the heir of Alexander, succeeding to his influence, his fame, and above all, his fortune. This brilliant personality condenses and prefigures the part that Rome is to play in the world's history, and the antithesis of the conquering State and the conquering hero is not confused by any striking heroic figure within the State itself. The throne is left empty for supernatural power by the failure of any natural claimant.

<sup>1</sup> In his address to Scipio before Zama (Polybius, xv. 6).

<sup>2</sup> Cæsar, *De Bello Gallico*, i. 40; Plutarch, *De Fortuna Romanorum*, 6.

<sup>3</sup> *De Fortuna Romanorum*, *passim*. Virtue and Fortune contest the authorship of Roman greatness, the speech of Fortune only is preserved, and was therefore, one imagines, the best. For the geese in the Capitol, c. 12; for the death of Alexander, c. 13.

In following the evolution of history from its Greek to its Roman period we are obliged to repeat, with a new sense of completeness, much that has been already recognised. The race that is dowered with genius can hardly exhibit limitations, even when subject to them, and Greece contains so much more than the ideal common to it with Rome, that in confining our gaze to the life of Greece, we do not see clearly the contrast between ancient and modern thought. All ancient life is based on the unity of the family, but when we come to the Roman Power of the Father, we gain a new discernment of what this meant. The absolute submission which every one owed the State he also either owed or claimed as a member of that group which was the unit of political organisation. He was thus taught from his earliest hour to regard irresponsible control as natural. He was led by all the potent and subtle influences of law and custom to submit to or to exercise this dominion without criticism or scruple. Irresponsible authority, unreserved obedience, were the two poles of domestic, no less than of political relation. The "Son under Power" was, against his father, no less defenceless than the slave. No age, almost no dignity, ended his subjection; he might be a father himself, he might fill the highest offices of the State; he none the less held life, liberty, and fortune at the pleasure of another. History describes to us few and dubious exercises of these paternal rights, but what may be done has always some relation to what is done. The relation of the most indulgent father to the most independent son must have been influenced by the fact that if the parental authority had been exercised to the detriment of the son's life or liberty the law would not have stepped in to abridge it. We see this influence in the only part of English law which contemplated till a recent period the exercise of control over mature and blameless human beings—in the legal position of married women. This is a fair but inadequate illustration of the effect of the Roman *Patria Potestas*. The English law took cognisance

of offences within the relation of dependence; the Roman law did not recognise right on the one side, or duty on the other. The plea which has been set up for English female offenders, that a wife could not refuse to obey the orders of her husband, has been felt by every one, even where it was not overruled, to be wholly out of harmony with the spirit of our legal system. But when a Roman officer was accused in the Senate of the heaviest crime of which it could take cognisance—organising Civil War—Tiberius, not speaking with authority as Emperor, but pleading as an anxious and careful vindicator of the laws, seems to have carried the Senate with him in his decision that “a son *cannot* decline the command of his father.”<sup>1</sup> He was speaking at a time when the whole system of which this paternal authority was the keystone had admitted a foreign element, when there was another spirit in the world, and the moral system of antiquity was about to fade in its light. Yet even then it appeared to a conservative that disloyalty to the State, great as was the crime, had no possible alternative in disobedience to the Father. “There are hardly any other men,” says the Roman jurist, “who have such power over their sons as we have.”<sup>2</sup> It was a natural result that no other State had such power over its subjects as Rome.

The incomplete virtue, says Cicero,<sup>3</sup> is typified by the obedience of a soldier; the complete virtue is typified by the obedience of a son. The claim for obedience, he implies, that is to satisfy the heart of man, must unite kindred with authority. Perhaps there is no passage in classical literature that comes so near the spirit of Christianity; yet it is no more than the perfection of that sense of membership which was the starting-point of political life in antiquity, and which Rome first disentangled from all admixture and brought out in its naked simplicity. In the life of Rome

connected  
with the  
perma-  
nence of  
Roman  
rule

<sup>1</sup> Tacitus, *Annals*, iii. 17

<sup>2</sup> Gaius, *Institutes*, i. 55

<sup>3</sup> *Questiones Tusculanae*, ii. 22.

and trans-  
formed  
in the  
Papacy.

was fulfilled the command with promise made to the chosen people; she taught the honour of the Father, and the days of her children were long in the land. In truth, union of the command with the promise is no exceptional grant to a favoured race, but a permanent law of human society, and its permanence is commemorated in the enduring dominion of the power which built in the principle of subordination with its very structure, insisting that every family should be a school of obedience. The lesson inculcated in every home was thus inwoven with all natural anticipation and all satisfied memory, and became to the Roman a vital instinct, a part of all thought and all feeling. No doubt the actual exercise of irresponsible authority among average Romans must have been often unjust; the instance given above from Tacitus illustrates the possibilities it opened of actual crime. Nevertheless it was allied with what was highest in the life of Rome. She based her power upon the filial spirit she had created in her sons; and thus the Fortune of Rome, although allied with cruelty, with perfidy, with heartless tyranny and rapacity, yet set forth an ideal which survived the order of things to which it was due, and became the basis of mediæval society. The Power of the Father, after it had ceased to be the animating principle of a State, became the centre of a Church. God's supposed vicegerent on earth took the place left vacant by the imperial spirit of the old world, or rather that spirit itself became incarnate in a succession of men, each of whom owed his power to the idea of a Holy Father. That he was neither Holy nor a Father, that his dominion was allied with monstrous wickedness, with tyranny and cruelty even greater than that which had preceded it, and with forms of evil that dominion had not known—this must be regarded as an additional tribute to the influence on men's minds of the root idea, showing its power to supply vitality through so much corruption. The story of the Turk who was converted to Christianity at Rome, being

convinced by what he saw there that only supernatural protection could explain the predominance of a power defying all earthly standards of justice, carries on in a grotesque form Plutarch's ideal of the Fortune of Rome. The idea of Christendom as a family, with a single head to which, as in every other family, subordination was due, gave Europe a centre lost with the decay of the Papacy, and for which it is still vainly striving. What approach it has known towards such a centre, such a unity, has been due, directly or indirectly, to Rome. Dante's ideal of a Holy Roman Empire<sup>1</sup> throws a thin, pure ray across the dust of the ages, and shows the dream of genius as a more revealing influence than the surest decisions of the rational understanding, but it has had no successor. Europe still yearns to find itself a Family; the memory of that unity must still haunt the capital of modern Italy. No fresh centre has been found to recover the magnetism which it has lost; the Patria Potestas of Rome has found no heir.

Like most other influences which have shown themselves in unquestionable outward result upon human beings, that which upheld the power of Rome appealed to their low as well as their high instincts; to the vulgar love of distinction and value for advantages because of their limited range, as well as to a true patriotism and a lofty ideal of national rule. As we watch the invasion of this platform of privilege by the excluded class, the successive devices by which the defenders endeavoured to render their concessions meaningless, and the strange transformation by which the sons of the victorious assailants are found among the most resolute defenders of the coveted vantage ground, we are forced to realise that in the idea of privilege there is something which objects of desire, in themselves far more excellent, cannot rival. We see in the evolution of national life what is

The graduated submission demanded by Rome is a combination of loyalty with servile fear.

<sup>1</sup> "Ahi gente, che dovesti esser divota  
E lasciar seder Cesar nella sella,  
Se bene intendi ciò che Dio ti nota!"  
—*Purgatorio*, vi. 91-94.



desirable at first confused with what is exceptional, and we thus learn to accept that husk of ungenerous denial which guards the kernel of righteous claim as an inevitable phase of social development. The structure of Roman dominion rests on a fusion of the loyal obedience of the son and the hopeless subjection of the slave, and we misunderstand it when we forget either element. It was by a profound policy that both were blended in a graduated system of constitutional relation. If privilege is to be durable, the harshness of contrast must be broken, the transition from power to weakness must be made to seem natural by being gradual; a neutral zone must intervene between the privileged and unprivileged, keeping up hope in the last body, and assigning a set of defenders to the first. Rome acted on this discernment, she infused the hope of liberty into subjection, and roused a vivid appreciation for every grant by bringing it into a close proximity with vain desire. This black background itself never disappears from the realm subject to her sway; but in the relations which we may conveniently, though inaccurately, call international, the lighter shades are everywhere found also. The disfranchised world was not homogeneous, a dawn of Roman right preceded its full concession; the private life might be subject to more or less limitation and its full franchise nearer or more remote, so that Rome had always a band of subjects who, being in sight of coveted advantages only just beyond their reach, were in the most favourable position for loyalty. Perhaps in enumerating all that was tangible in these advantages, important as they are, we should hardly exhaust the attractions of Roman citizenship. There is a kind of satisfaction in association with a favoured race which escapes the analysis of Logic and points to an instinct deeply rooted in our nature; an instinct turning in weariness from the transitoriness of things to whatever presents any show of permanence, and takes the mind into the far past and the distant future.

From the fact that Rome embodied in her political structure a relation which Greece only knew as exhibited between individuals, we can trace in Roman far more clearly than in Greek history and character the moral influence of slavery. It is not that the indifference to the interests of the slave where they conflicted with those of the master was greater among Romans than it was among Greeks, for that was impossible. Given actual slaves and actual masters, Athenian and Roman seem to have felt much the same. But there was a difference in the attitude of mind which the two races respectively took up towards the area which they were prepared to give over to slavery, and the contrast between Rome and Greece is in this respect almost as instructive as the contrast between Rome and England. Both the precept of the Platonic Socrates<sup>1</sup> and the example of Callicratidas show us that when one Greek enslaved another there must have been a certain sense of latent doubt as to the right, than which nothing can be more numbing to vigorous action. The double vision which hovered before the mental eye makes a sure aim impossible. May we smite our enemies fearlessly? What is meant by *we*? The second question prevents all clear answer to the first. Athens could not but ask it, England cannot but ask it, Rome never asked it. That expansion of the self which prepares unselfishness rises like a tide, and like a tide, though never, we may hope, to the same degree, it has its ebb. Athenian and Spartan recognised that they were alike Hellenes; Englishmen and Frenchmen realise that they are alike Europeans, they begin to realise that their extra-European enemies and they are alike men. The ideals of a common Hellenism, a common civilisation, a common humanity, represent successively the rising tide; the dominion of Rome represents its ebb. Therein lies its strength. Liberty in the view of the Athenian, and liberty in the full sense of the word, was the right of other cities besides Athens. Liberty in the

Rome carries the master and slave view of antiquity to its logical conclusion.

<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 221.

full sense of the word was, in the view of Romans, the right of no city but Rome. The Athenian ideal was fundamentally inconsistent with ancient slavery. That the Roman ideal was a consistent carrying out of the principle of ancient slavery explains the dominion of Rome. It had not, as Greece had, a sense of racial unity, which was outraged by the form of its social organisation. It did not in the case of States presuppose liberty, and in the case of individuals admit of its complete deprivation. It arrogated to itself that position which was typified by every household in its dominion. It was able to govern the world, and it insisted, with perfect consistency, that its dominion over the world should be absolute.

Its enduring  
dominion  
due to this  
consistent  
hardness.

Hence it arises, in spite of all we have seen, that slavery seems more at home in Rome than in Greece. A sense of separateness, unsoftened by any admixture of that sense of a common humanity, present to some degree in almost all modern feeling, is exhibited to us in ancient slavery; and it is vain to deny that the whole antique world, but Rome in a special sense, had here a simplicity of strength lacking to all modern government. We may almost say that Rome drew from slavery the strength that any modern Government would gain if its poor suddenly became satisfied. True, the slave sometimes made Rome feel that he was not satisfied. But no servile insurrections did so much to diminish her power as the discontent of the least discontented peasantry of the modern world does. It was, while it lasted, a terror and a danger. But an insurrection does not sap the strength of the nation, if it do not in any degree enlist the sympathy of the upper class. Spartacus, in any modern State, would have had influential admirers in the Senate. We can hardly conceive that it never entered into the heart of a Roman to hesitate in the desire for the defeat of the servile armies. Probably the only result of their approach to success was to weld the structure they attacked into a closer unity. Not a single arm was paralysed by the

doubt whether the blow was just. We might be favoured by Nature with abundant harvests, and by Fortune with prosperous trade; all legislative concession might be made to the lower class, all but the inevitable privileges of the higher abolished—and still we should not have reached that position of convenient and secure independence which the Romans gained by being steeled against pity. Perfect justice in poor and rich alike would be needed before we should reach the disentanglement from all our difficulties that they gained by a repudiation of all those feelings and ideas on which Justice is founded. A deep instinct in our nature shrinks from the belief that this is possible, we crave with an inextinguishable yearning the belief that Right is Might. We forget that what gives strength is completeness and consistency, and that human beings, especially those masses of human beings whose action is traceable in the course of History, have not yet exhibited this completeness and consistency on the side of Justice. If it be urged that neither have they done so on the side of injustice, we must perforce reply that the approach here is least far nearer. Wherever slavery exists the interests of a mass of men are consigned to absolute oblivion. The most tender-hearted philanthropist of the modern world does not remember the sufferings of the poor with the same steady consistency as the Roman forgot the interests of the slave world. What men would be whose mutual relations exhibited perfect justice the world has not yet seen. What men are to each other who exhibit that perfect injustice by which the strong treat the weak as things, not persons—this the Roman world exhibits to the student of history, and also forces him to recognise as in its degree a source of strength.

For it is still more significant in cosmopolitan Rome than in city-divided Greece, that another people, distinguished by no mark of complexion, dress, or cultivation, were separated from those among whom they dwelt, by the barrier of legal helplessness. We underrate the importance

Roman  
slavery

of slavery in the ancient world when we replace in imagination our domestic servants by slaves. The free-born Roman had no monopoly of cultivation. Few pursuits which in our day absorb and reward the attention of the professional class were not represented in the slave-gang of a wealthy Roman. A writer who has made the subject his study has given his opinion, borne out to some extent by the low price of books at Rome, that what the press performs for modern life was effected for the ancient world by slavery.<sup>1</sup> What a world of thought, feeling, hope, and fear, shut out from all large interests of life, is implied in the fact that it is possible to suppose the slaves under the empire as active in diffusing literature as the printing-press! The friend and fellow-worker of the cultured thinker of antiquity was the specimen of a class that had no rights.<sup>2</sup> We need no harrowing pictures to make us believe in the forlorn condition of a people legally defenceless; such a condition is painted for us by the tone of allusion to cruelties in men who were otherwise eminently humane.

as seen by  
the best  
Romans.

It is not a lesson that we derive first from Rome. The extracts from Greek authors given in the last chapter exhibit the consistent unfeelingness of the slave master with a fullness which seems hardly to admit of addition. It does not admit of intensifying, for it is absolute. But nevertheless the fact that the imperial attitude of Rome towards the world found its pattern in the relation of a Roman paterfamilias to his mixed household of children and slaves does bring out the ruthlessness engendered by slavery with a unique force. In spite of all the forcible and lamentable illustrations given above, the best-known illustrations of the spirit of ancient slavery are Roman. Two may find place here, the first giving a vivid picture of the influence of slavery on the wise and good; the last, of its legalised atrocities.

<sup>1</sup> See a note in Merivale's *Roman Empire*, vi. 233.

<sup>2</sup> Tiro, Cicero's freedman, is believed to have edited his letters.



Among the select company of those who, throughout the ages, have exhibited some approximation to what a modern understands by humanity, we shall hardly find a more distinguished example than Cicero. He seems, in almost all the relations of life, to have shown himself as no less considerate, affectionate, and forbearing than a cultured Englishman formed under the influence of Christianity; and we do not, so far as his own household is concerned, find the relation of master and slave among the exceptions. Nevertheless it is from his best-known oration that we may cite an expression of all in slavery that is most detestable. After the second servile struggle for freedom in Sicily had failed, the use of weapons was forbidden to slaves in Sicily; they were to defend themselves from the attacks of wild animals and robbers, apparently, only by clubs and stones. Perhaps it was owing to this immunity that a fierce boar spread havoc among the flocks, and the terror thereby produced, we must suppose, overcame the dread of Roman severity. A brave Sicilian shepherd encountered and slew the boar, and secure in the consciousness of a public benefaction, ventured, when a proclamation was issued inviting disclosure, to betray his possession of a weapon by producing the javelin which had freed the country from a pest. He doubtless expected to be rewarded as a public benefactor; he found his reward on the cross! "Perhaps some will think this hard," says Cicero,<sup>1</sup> in words impossible to transcribe without indignation, "but for my part I had rather that Domitius" (the prætor) "should err on the side of harshness than on that of laxity." Better inflict a death of torture and ignominy as requital of a public benefit, thought the patriotic Roman, than entrust a man who has been robbed of his liberty with any possible means of regaining it. Can we more effectively exhibit the spirit engendered by slavery than in thus summarising his words?

as seen by  
Cicero.

<sup>1</sup> *In Verrem*, v. 3.

and by  
Tacitus.

The second typical case of Roman barbarity towards slaves, as it concerned four hundred victims instead of one, will appear to some readers even more telling. In the reign of Nero a distinguished Roman, Pedanius Secundus, prefect of the City, was murdered by one of his large household of slaves, in revenge, it appeared, for some grievous injury, according to one account the withholding of promised liberty. Under the ruthless law of Rome the slaves who had taken no steps to prevent the murder of their master were held guilty of it; and the whole "familia"—it is instructive that we must translate this word by *slave-gang*—to the number of four hundred persons, were condemned to death. Either the number of the victims, or some circumstance unknown to us, roused popular sympathy with them, and the sentence was not passed in the Senate without much opposition. Tacitus records,<sup>1</sup> with apparent sympathy, the arguments by which the massacre was there justified—at least he gives them at some length, and cites nothing on the other side. "I have often watched in silence the progress of innovation, Conscript Fathers," said the eminent jurist who supported the sentence of death, "not from any doubt of its evil tendency, but from the fear of impairing such influence as I might possess before it was urgently needed for the welfare of the commonwealth. Such an occasion has arisen to-day. A man of consular rank has fallen victim to a servile plot. Decree impunity in such a case, allow space for considerations of provocation, and you remove every safeguard from a position of vast peril. We, a handful in a crowd, are safe only while slaves have an interest in the life of their master, and perish with him. Our ancestors, although their slaves were born on their property and linked to them by kindly intercourse, always regarded them with suspicion. We have to deal with servants alien in race and religion, "

<sup>1</sup> *Annals*, xiv. 42-45.

motley rabble who must be ruled by terror. Vain is the endeavour to combine such a rule with strict justice to individuals. 'The interest of the common weal must outweigh the inevitable injustice inherent in every exemplary penalty.' Against such arguments, the historian tells us, no one ventured to formulate any definite reply, but a confused murmur attested the compassion inspired by a doomed and for the most part innocent multitude; and outside the Senate the opposition was so strong that the sentence was carried out only with the aid of a formidable military force. But carried out it was. Four hundred persons of various races, members of our own land probably among them, died to atone for a murder which it is possible they would have prevented had they known of it, and the only voice which reaches us across two millenniums from the tragedy is one of triumph in the massacre. It is not the only voice which strove to influence the issue. When we read of the precautions which had to be taken in order to insure the four hundred executions, we perceive that there must have been many in the Rome of A.D. 60 who sympathised with the sufferings of the slave; as even in the Rome for which Cicero prepared his oration against Verres one hundred and thirty years previously, there must surely have been some. But what is significant is that these are voiceless. The confused murmur which Tacitus mentions, as against the cogent arguments which he records, represent respectively the growing sense of humanity and the iron exclusiveness of Rome.

The continuous and hereditary submission of the many to the few, however brutal be the command thus enforced, is, if those few be the representatives of national authority, in its essence, submission to Law. Here we have the moral legacy of Rome. It is an idea fertile in many directions—how fertile we can hardly measure, because we cannot think of Europe without it. Perhaps the contrasted history of those portions of our own United

The moral influence of submission to Rome.

Kingdom which have and have not felt the yoke of Rome may afford some hint as to the seed left in any soil she occupied even for a short time and a small space. The British island which never felt the yoke of Rome has been the home of lawlessness, even though it was also at the very opening of its history the Isle of Saints; and a general consensus of historic opinion accepts with satisfaction the triumph of Roman over the far more attractive form of Celtic Christianity.<sup>1</sup> The Church that tyrannised was the Church that organised. Where Rome came there remained the seed of organisation. Laws are known wherever human beings are gathered into groups possessing any enduring unity, but Law, as an abstract idea, began with the supremacy of Rome over many races, and her endeavour to recognise and incorporate their several laws. Even as between Roman and non-Roman, Justice was conceived as a theoretic possibility, or there could never have been the prosecution of a Verres; and although it was an idea never steadily contemplated, probably, by any Roman tribunal, and the attempt to enforce it must have roused rather the sense of injustice than of justice, it yet remained as an aspiration and a dawning ideal. The sense of injustice is a stage in the development of the sense of justice; or rather it is this last in a particular atmosphere. It formed no part, probably, of the sufferings inflicted by Assyria or even Persia; it could not begin to exist till men had some general conception of a universal law. We can hardly overrate the importance of an absolute beginning. The idea of the Reign of Law has passed into every department of life, and it is scarcely possible for us to return to the mental phase for which it was a novelty. Let us so far make the endeavour as to turn back to the point where that stream of properly scientific thought first takes its rise, and recognise it, as a translation into an intellectual idiom, of the spirit of Roman Law.

<sup>1</sup> At the Synod of Whitby, A.D. 664.



There never was a nation, probably, which cared less than the Romans for Physical Science. Nevertheless, it is in the only great poem written by a Roman that we see this conception steadily grasped for the first time. The poem on Nature by Lucretius is no doubt unscientific in the sense of showing a fundamental misconception of the right method of science; it assumes, in common with the whole of antiquity, that reason is to supply, as well as to sift and arrange, the data of physical theory; while its indifference to detail vividly illustrates the result of this error. But to embody the idea of an invariable sequence in popular expression was, in the last century before Christ, to inaugurate a new and pregnant intellectual conception, in comparison with which all such mistakes are insignificant. To-day the idea is obvious. It is just that part of physical science which is accessible to thought apart from observation, which is to nature what wise trust is to character. Nevertheless there were keen and profound intellects in antiquity to which it was not clear, and though it must have hovered before every such mind when it turned towards the outward world, yet we may say that it was original in Lucretius, in the sense that to hail an idea with joyous welcome is to give it new life. He turned from "the loud stunning tide of human care and crime" to that realm of Nature where he could hear the melodies "of the everlasting chime." In what a different spirit from Keble's! And yet in one not less real; not, we may say in some sense, less religious. While no investigator of Nature ever consulted his work as an authority for any natural fact or law, yet all may turn to it for the statement of principles and the expression of feelings which give to Science both its light and its glow; there in germ is the principle of transmuted force, and there too in its fulness is the "cosmic emotion" of our latest thought. Of all who have found a religion in the contemplation of Nature, none ever was a more fervent and devout worshipper than the poet of whom

Roman law  
educates  
mankind in  
the spirit of  
Science.



we can hardly say that he knew a single one of its laws.

Lucretius  
sees Law  
as the  
negation  
of Will.

Lucretius did not consciously recognise what we could call law in nature; what he did recognise there was, if we look at it from our point of view, a mere privation of law. But to him Chance was (almost the contrary of what it is to us) the negation of the arbitrary element; of what we should remember rather as Wilfulness than Will; it was that general tendency of things which makes for order, if only it be not interfered with by the irregular impulse of human passions. Chance did, in fact, present itself to this early phase of thought as a sort of abstract representation of Law. Just as fortune had brought out of the atomic life of separate cities the vast structure of the Roman dominion, so Chance had from the region of atoms evolved the stately fabric of the Universe and the elaborate life of Civil Society. The process of evolution between this beginning and the Roman Empire was imperilled only by the desultory impulses of individual desire and aversion; and Lucretius lived in the days when this individual agency was assuming large and turbulent proportions, when the passions of a Marius and a Sulla seemed to threaten the very existence of the one State of the world. His early life was passed amid the terrors of sedition and the horrors of civil bloodshed; he must have shuddered at the days of slaughter which followed the return of Marius; the months of assassination which followed the return of Sulla; while the conspiracy of Catiline renewed these memories in his manhood; and his life was ended (tradition says by his own hand) amid the turmoil which associated itself with the name of Clodius and the coming civil war. He lived when the dread of individuality, which animated so much of ancient life, was justified by terrible hatred, deadly revenge, reckless ambition; when it would seem as if the first necessity of a State was to get rid of its great men.

To him Will was the destructive, not the constructive, agency. He saw in Nature an escape from its dominion, and when he eagerly explained away all purpose in the Universe he was, in intention, making room for that orderly impulse of law so deeply rooted in his mind that, like the atmosphere, it rushed in to fill every vacancy, and seemed present wherever the agency of man was withdrawn. The object of his poem is well marked in a few lines,<sup>1</sup> where he describes the effect of watching a review from a distance, and after painting the tumult, the glitter, and the movement of the mighty legions, ends with the touch of quiet—

"Yet sees the traveller from the mountain's height,  
The hurrying crowds as some still speck of light."

It was his object to contemplate the hurrying crowds of life from that remote height where their distracted movement was reduced to rest and their vehement tumult was still.

Hence the tone of delight in which the poet set forth a scheme of life which, though it would be wise to recognise if it were certain, could never, we should have thought, be an object of any higher feeling than despairing resignation. No divine hope could be too great for the burst of apocalyptic joy with which Lucretius brings this scheme forward. The new Jerusalem descending out of Heaven is hardly hymned with more mystic rapture. Its power and its weakness are strikingly illustrated by its effect on an illustrious reader of modern times. It was a favourite study with Frederick the Great, and was recommended by him to a bereaved friend as a manual of consolation. The great general was probably far nearer the intellectual position of the Roman poet than is any reader of our day; he too had been delivered from an oppressive bondage associated with a religion powerless to elevate and purify, potent only

He emphasises the classical dread of personality.

<sup>1</sup> Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura*, ii. 323 seq.

to narrow and harden the soul. He must have come much nearer to the rapture of escape, as from a galling prison, expressed in this Pagan psalm, than almost any Christian who has ever read the poem. And yet even he found it potent only for the ills of his neighbour; it broke down as a remedy for his own.<sup>1</sup> The pagan king, the friend of Voltaire, was too Christian for the consolations of Lucretius. He felt as a pagan of our day—

“Je souffre, il est trop tard; le monde s'est fait vieux.  
Une immense espérance a traversée la terre  
Malgré nous vers le ciel il faut tourner les yeux.”<sup>2</sup>

Or at all events, it was no gospel to him in the hour of defeat, to be told that there was no future beyond the grave which could meet glances either of hope or of dread. The immense hope of the world has passed into the soul of modern life, if not as a belief, then as an irremovable contrast to every other belief; it has fixed the cravings of the heart even when it has not touched a single conviction of the mind. The infinite future it has opened has remained as a yearning when it has vanished as an expectation; and the hope of Heaven, that has thrilled many a heart cold beneath the sod, survives in other forms in those who scoff at it as folly, or argue against it as delusion. It is hard for us to put ourselves in the place of men who had neither the hope itself nor any of the visions and regrets into which it is transformed—men to whom the world of the citizen, with its finite possibilities, filled the horizon of interest, and became the nurse of all desire. The aim of Lucretius was to banish that idea of Divine agency which he conceived rather as a scheme of interference than of government. We must, if we would understand him,

<sup>1</sup> “C'est un palliatif pour les maladies de l'ame,” he wrote to D'Alembert on the death of Mlle. de Lespinasse. “Je n'y ai trouvé que la nécessité du mal et l'inutilité du remède,” he answered D'Argens, under the discouragement of defeat in the Seven Years' War.

<sup>2</sup> Alfred de Musset.

and the principles to which he has given a voice for all time, enter on the position of an ardent Republican, deprecating all concessions which might pave the way for a possible Cæsar. The idea of Law seems cold to an inhabitant of Western Europe because he sees it against that background of Love which even our poor and inadequate Christianity has evoked at least as a claim. Set it against its historic background, that of tyranny, and we shall understand the passionate welcome given to any scheme of sequence which excluded the agency of anything like human Will.

We make our way up the mountain of truth, as up every other mountain, by a perpetual zigzag. The world has turned alternately to the organic and the mechanical view of Nature, alternatives perhaps brought home more clearly to the imagination when contrasted as personal and impersonal. We see them most sharply contrasted in the great scientific battle of our yesterday. Those of us who have lived more than half a century in this world were taught in their childhood that the reason why a horse and an ass, for instance, were like each other, was the will of the Creator. This can hardly be called a scientific theory; it was rather accepted by scientific men as the boundary of science; but it was so accepted within living memory. Then came the doctrine familiar under the name of Natural Selection, and young people were taught that the reason why a horse and an ass were alike was their descent from a common ancestor; the reason why they were different, the fact that small hereditary variations had proved useful in the struggle for life. Now this latest triumph of science marks its swing towards the impersonal view of Nature. Nothing can be more unlike the action of human wisdom than the production of these small variations, useless for the most part, and the wasteful destruction of the greater part of what is produced. Lucretius, we find, here speaks the language of modern science. Accident, he

Systole and diastole of scientific thought.

says, originated all kinds of varieties of structure (that he made them great instead of small has nothing to do with the argument), and those only were preserved which were fitted to the condition of things in which they found themselves. The exposition must be discerned as an unquestionable anticipation of the great scientific theory of our day,<sup>1</sup> whenever any one can look at it without prejudice. But now go back two centuries nearer to Lucretius, to the widest generalisation, perhaps, that science has ever achieved—the discovery of Gravitation. This was a swing to the other side, a turn in the zigzag that brings the traveller very near the idea of personal action. We can hardly enunciate the law without using words that belong to the personal world. “The most perfect vacuum,” says a modern writer,<sup>2</sup> “may be truly said to be full of this influence,” which, though so subtle, so impalpable, that it needs the utmost efforts of genius to demonstrate its existence and its laws, “is yet a necessary concomitant of matter.” Now here, surely, we are on the borders of the spiritual world. And it is evident that this resemblance to personal agency impelled Lucretius to scorn that dim vision of the law of gravitation which was present to his contemporaries; it is ridiculed by him as an absurd fiction, ascribing the “love of a centre”<sup>3</sup> to entities of which the chief thing he wanted to say was, that they felt no love. His passionate desire to expunge from Nature all resemblance to human agency, would have made our modern science appear to him almost as full of impersonations as ancient mythology. We are startled to find the anticipator of the origin of species by natural selection rejecting the theory of the four elements;

<sup>1</sup> Lucretius, *De Rerum Naturâ*, v. 837, 877. I once showed the passage to Mr. Darwin, but the dialect was too unscientific for him, and I do not think he recognised it as the anticipation of his own views.

<sup>2</sup> The Bishop of Carlisle, in the *Nineteenth Century Review*, Dec. 1886.

<sup>3</sup> “Haud igitur possunt tali ratione teneri  
Res in concilio medii cuppedine victæ.”

—*De Rerum Naturâ*, i. 1081, 2.

See the whole argument against gravitation from 1052.



a theory which, already preached by one whom he calls "the holiest of men,"<sup>1</sup> lasted till it was absorbed into the chemistry of the eighteenth century, and laid the basis of the idea of chemical action. It is set aside in favour of the most childish, the most meagre scheme of the age, simply because it was the most inhuman. The perpetual rain of atoms rushing downwards through the void space was surely the most reduced apparatus a philosopher could concede to his scheme of the Universe. But it was this rigid parsimony which was the attraction of his scheme to a mind seeking above all things the impersonal. He would have found no repose in a world composed of our molecules, with their attractions and repulsions; ridiculous figments, as it would have seemed to him, of love and hatred. His atoms were as unlike as possible to persons, and that was all he asked of them. This meagre simplicity was exactly what his spirit craved. It was the ideal of the one State of the world. All special tendency found its analogue in that individual feeling which Rome set itself to crush, and which, when it did not crush, it feared. Sulla and Marius embodied the individual agency on its darker side, while the dagger of Brutus was, as it were, already sharpening to express the defiance of Rome to their noblest successor. Rome enforced a barren uniformity, and this was the idea carried out by the Roman poet.

The poem of Lucretius is an expression, in a protestant form, of that idea of a Holy Order which we have seen at its highest pitch in the speculations of Indian theosophy. He often reminds his readers of these speculations; we find the same yearning for a deliverance from all the restlessness of life in a surrender to Nature. Lucretius did not deny the existence of the gods, he rather saw in them the models for man. They live apart from all desire and fear, in a profound repose. Man too might reach their repose if he would enter into their vision of reality, if he

The compassion of Lucretius.

<sup>1</sup> i.e. Empedocles. *Ibid.* i. 712-733.

would cease from those impulses of ambition, avarice, and revenge, which are the invaders of human life, not its legitimate rulers; if he would recognise the realm of law, which is to him a prison when he endeavours to escape from it, but when he accepts its restraints, the most blessed home. The Indian ideal of Resignation pervades the whole poem; Nature stretches her compassionate arms towards the feverish sons of man, and woos them to repose on that calm bosom that knows not love or hate. But we have passed from the East to the West, and man needs Resignation not to live but to die. Life is finite; man has to accept its limits. The race that has left its memorials in the long 'straight roads that led to the city, the aqueducts that brought it water, the triumphal arch that spoke its glories, while the temples of its gods are mere copies, had no hope of a hereafter. That was associated with terror and dread. The Roman poet rebukes the desire of life beyond the grave, as the Indian would have rebuked it if it had come before him as a practical danger. To the Roman it was not only that arrogance of individualism which to both races was equally abhorrent, but a yearning after the Infinite, which, while it was the very breath of life to the Indian, was the seed of all disorder to the definite positive spirit of the prosaic Roman race. The ideal of the Roman poet is the indifference of Natural Law to human desire—an ideal, as it were, set to music by the joy of escape from the belief in vindictive powers. We find on his page a few pages of exquisite pathos—passages which foreshadow the tender human sympathies of Gray; the pure, delicate, natural sympathies of Wordsworth. Nothing in poetry is more full of a subdued, hidden pity than the lines in which Lucretius describes the wanderings of the cow whose calf has fallen at the altar of superstition;<sup>1</sup> nor could we easily produce from the poetry of any race or age the expression of a deeper sense of human love and the pathos of its frail tenure than

<sup>1</sup> Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura*, li. 230-231.

that which the English reader knows in the beautiful, but still inferior imitation by Gray—

"For thee no more the cheerful hearth shall burn  
And busy housewife ply her evening care,  
No children run to hup their sire's return,  
And climb his knees the envied kiss to share."<sup>1</sup>

But at the same time these passages cannot be called characteristic of Lucretius; or at least they are characteristic only as the rare gleams when a finer self seems to break through the habitual self. They are not the utterance of his continuous thought. His habitual theme is the dominance of Law, and this interpolation of pity almost interrupts it; it is a modulation into a key which must be quitted before the original theme can be taken up.

When we turn to Virgil we find that the interpolation has become the theme. The feeling that touched the earlier poem with streaks of tender irrelevance expands to colour the whole. Virgil sings the growth of Rome, as Lucretius the formation of the Universe; there is a kindred nature in the theme, but the note of triumphant dominion in the Roman has dropped into a note of sad submission in the Mantuan. Virgil, belonging by blood, and bound by sympathy to the conquered Italian race, while culture and friendship attached him to the court of Augustus, was fitted to express both a true loyalty for a ruler of Rome, and a deep sympathy for its subjects. All the interest of Roman history lies in its victims; and Virgil has given a voice to the rest. He, the dispossessed Italian, with the longing for his Mantuan home always in his heart, and yet with a deep acquiescence in that Imperial rule which implies a world of such mournful exiles, was marked out alike by Fate and Nature as the poet of Resignation. This

The compassion of Virgil

<sup>1</sup> Compare Lucretius, *oil.* 894-896—

"Jam jam tibi lora accipiet læta neque uxor  
Optima nec dulces occurrent oscula nati  
Præcipue, et læta potius dulcedine tangent."

is the clue to his mystic charm; this explains his strange legendary position as the herald of a faith of which he never heard, and in which he would probably have taken a merely literary interest if he had heard of it. The ideal of obedience, of receptivity, is the seed of all that has made him immortal. In his resolute avoidance of originality he stands alone among the great poets of the world. No other name known to succeeding generations belongs to an avowed, unvarying imitator; it is as if Goethe had piqued himself on having produced perfect German adaptations from Corneille and Racine. The literature of Greece filled the whole horizon of the intellectual world for the conquerors of Greece; to adapt, to embody, to imitate was, they thought, the only possible intellectual aim for themselves. The Roman took towards Greek literature the attitude which English faith has taken towards that of Judæa; originality would have been regarded as equally an error in both cases. The very word by which the Church has designated false doctrine expresses the Roman dread of originality. A heresy is a "choice," it is an intrusion of the element of self into the action which should be one of simple reception. The spirit of orthodoxy looks with a certain dread on originality. Ultimately, perhaps, it will not be found that the ages of orthodoxy have been those deficient in originality; but, for good and for ill alike, the fact is that wherever orthodoxy exists, all thought stamped with individual impulse attracts suspicion. And the fact that Roman literature found its orthodox model in Greek thought explains what might almost be called the servile element in Virgil. His intellectual submission to Greece illustrates the spirit that brought a world into subjection to the dominion of Rome.

Virgil and  
Words-  
worth.

We see in Lucretius the rapture with which the idea of Law—the influence that moulds and penetrates all Roman thought—is hailed when contrasted with images of disorderly impulse and caprice; we discern the spirit of science in that first energy of distinctness and of narrow limitation which

is given by protest against the spirit of superstition. In Virgil this reverence for order is even deeper, but it is less logical. It is deeper, for it demands that continuity with the past which surely is a test of true order. It accepts history as a witness for man's nature no less trustworthy than science; it cherishes the fragment of truth hidden in the legendary lore of the past, and never rejects any fiction that may prove a husk of the smallest fact or a vehicle of the vaguest truth. But at the same time it welcomes with an eager homage the great idea of Natural Law. There is no care for an exact harmony between traditional belief and the Order of Nature, only a fearless reverence for both, and a dim feeling of some underlying reality deeper than either. A vague Pantheism harmonises the world of mythology and the world of science, and enables the poet to tread in the footsteps of Lucretius, and yet to remain a constant and reverent visitor in the domain that Lucretius hated. The poet who best interprets him to the English reader is Wordsworth. Nature awakens in the Italian as in the English poet the solemn delight of confronting

"A presence that disturbs me with the joy  
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime  
Of something far more deeply interfused,  
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,  
And the round ocean and the living air,  
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man  
A motion and a spirit, that impels  
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,  
And rolls through all things."<sup>1</sup>

In these noble lines we have no more than a full and fluent expression of a feeling that meets us more than once in brief and broken hints from the earlier poet. The intervening two thousand years, the birth and death of nations, the development of a new faith—all these have affected the

<sup>1</sup> Wordsworth, *Tintern Abbey*. These lines are almost a translation of the address of Anchises to Æneas (*Æn.* vi. 724 seq.).



meaning of many words, but they leave these almost unchanged.

Virgil and  
modern  
science.

On the one hand, this feeling melts into sympathy with the old mythology; on the other hand, it passes into admiration for the orderly sequences of Nature; so that the two feelings which, to the view of Lucretius, as to that of so many a religious thinker of our day, seem hopelessly opposed, were harmonised by his vague Pantheism—harmonised more fully than is possible to any one who looks back from our present position, and watching the conflict of Religion and Science through so many centuries, sees the argument of each side tested by the keen acid of hostile criticism. Thus Virgil has far more sympathy with the scientific spirit than Wordsworth; there is in him no touch of scorn such as that uttered in Wordsworth's *Poet's Epitaph*—

"Physician art thou? one, all eyes,  
Philosopher! a fingering slave,  
One that would peep and botanise  
Upon his mother's grave?"

To Virgil there would be nothing jarring in the juxtaposition of any possible interest in Nature, and any possible human sorrow; the harmony of Natural Law was to him the fitting theme of the bard. The lay which excites enthusiastic admiration from the storm-tossed Trojans at the court of Dido tells of no heroic achievement, no legend of Divine agency, but of

"The various labours of the wandering moon,  
And whence proceed the eclipses of the sun;  
The original of men and beasts, and whence  
The rains arise, and fires their warmth dispense,  
And fixed and erring stars dispose their influence;  
What shakes the solid earth, what cause delays  
The summer nights and shortens winter days."<sup>1</sup>

The feeling which here binds the poet to Lucretius separates him from Wordsworth; it is as unlike any modern poet to

<sup>1</sup> *Æneid*, i. 742, Dryden's translation.

find in Natural Science the material of poetry as it is unlike Homer. The choice of such a subject marks the dawn of scientific thought and the twilight of classical poetry. But Virgil's yearnings after science, his deep reverence for the natural laws that seemed to his forerunner a welcome substitute for the presence of anything Divine, did not in his mind conflict with a strong love of the legendary past and a devout sense of the Divine Presence that animated Nature. He stood at that point in History in which the idea of a universal dominion gathered up into itself the philosophy, mythology, and science of the world. The idea of Law in Nature, which to his forerunner was mainly a negation of personal will in Nature, was to him no more than the real presence of a spirit of order, penetrating the whole of Nature, and infusing its own impulse into all life. It is the spirit which sets everything in its place, and brings the "perpetual edict"<sup>1</sup> of a Catholic rule to regulate the varied sphere of human achievement. This, we may say, is the ideal of the Universal Empire, as it passed into the ideal of the Universal Church; and so far as the Roman Empire became universal, it was because, to some extent, it did embody this principle, upholding Law against individual tyranny. This at least was the aspect under which such spirits as those of Virgil were able to submit themselves to its dominion. The central influence which makes Nature one—that idea, which has dawned on our world as the correlation of forces, of an energy underlying all phenomena, identical under various forms—this idea, translated into the political world, finds its best symbol in such an empire as that of Rome, as it represented itself to its best men. And the mind of the great Italian poet reflects this ideal both in the natural and the human world. Nature is a stern ruler, relaxing no severity of claim in pity to human weakness; man must serve her by arduous,

<sup>1</sup> The "edictum perpetuum" was the rule promulgated by a Roman magistrate at his entrance upon his year of office, declaring the principles by which his decisions were to be guided, and by embodying that of his predecessor, gradually developing into a regular system of equity.

unvarying toil, carrying on a continual warfare against some seemingly hostile power. But this arduous struggle is, in truth, the task appointed by a beneficent ruler, and in this apparent strife man is truly engaged with a "most just" being, who requites all trust with rich repayment.<sup>1</sup> The steadiness, the law-abiding spirit of Nature, haunts Virgil's mind with an image of repose deeper than the sense of arduous toil which also belongs to it. The two are sometimes illogically combined, but they have an actual harmony. Virgil is in this the true exponent of his nation. To the Latin language belongs the word by which we express fortitude in toil; where the virtue seems indicated in Greek phrase the eulogium is almost an apology. The race which first awakens to the majesty of law also first sets forth the dignity of labour; the two ideas are correlative; in the verse of Virgil we find both set to music.

Virgil, the  
prophet of  
Evolution.

The same combination of submission to a severe law-giver and loyalty to a steadfast law is found in his philosophy of life. The power that decides on the destiny of nations is also stern and ruthless; often it seems cruel. Virtue and piety win no obvious reward; the sympathy of the poet takes one course, and the decision of Providence another. There is no writer who, more than Virgil, enlarges on the text, "God moves in a mysterious way." Trust in a lying Greek brings on the ruin of Troy, and no God interposes to avenge the treachery which has requited compassionate aid with ruin. The hospitality of Latinus involves his country in the miseries of war. Dido suffers for taking pity on Æneas, as Priam, for taking pity on Sinon, her pangs prefigure and embody the pangs of Carthage; the Queen perishes, as her city is to perish; and the very words in which the Trojans, entreating her shelter, deprecate the idea of hostile intentions towards her people, seem to reflect upon the barbarous policy to be carried out in the third

<sup>1</sup> Virgil, *Georgics*, ii. 459.

Punic war.<sup>1</sup> The fall of Troy, narrated by a survivor of the royal family, flings its lurid light on the long train of victims to the great Power whose rise is yet announced with religious reverence, as, in a special sense, the agent of the Divine Will. Dido and Turnus, the Carthaginian Queen and the Italian Prince, gather up the claims of all the vast world that was to be crushed by Rome, and embody all that sympathy with the vanquished and unhappy which we feel on every page. The dominion towards which the whole action of the story moves on was one of crushing severity, and this thought seems never out of the mind of the poet, who treats it as an ordinance of Heaven. Nevertheless he contemplates the stately structure with awe that is not servile; he feels it to belong to that order of colossal events which must be explained by Divine purpose, and from that point of view submission takes the aspect of a religious duty. The craving of his soul is for repose. His storm-tossed spirit poured its yearnings into the wail of his wandering hero, and he uttered as aspirations for the unbuilt Rome that desire for the stable Empire which he imagined and desired with passionate need as the very presentation and embodiment of the City of God.

When, therefore, Virgil hails the foundation of the Empire with a record of the legendary past full of mere fiction, and yet containing a prophecy of its eternity, we must not look upon him as a courtly sycophant inaugurating the new art of flattery by a prostitution of genius. Belonging by blood and bound by sympathy to the conquered Italian race, while culture and friendship attached him to the court of Augustus, he was fitted to express both a true loyalty for a ruler of Rome, and a deep sympathy for its subjects and victims. The two feelings seem inharmonious, and in this twentieth century after Christ perhaps they are

Virgil and  
the Roman  
Empire.

<sup>1</sup> "Non nos aut ferro Libycoo populare Penates  
Venimus, aut raptas ad littora vertere praeda."  
—*Æn.* i. 531, 532.

so. We look back upon a long course of struggle between the rulers and the ruled, and discern that no earthly power is the rightful claimant of uncritical submission from mature human beings. We see that the great unity which Virgil welcomed was, in the long course of things, the foe of Liberty without being the friend of Peace. While we cannot but recognise the sway of Rome as an important and indispensable stage in the evolution of European civilisation—as divine in the sense that that whole evolution is divine—we see also that the antagonism of barbaric invasion was divine in just the same sense, and brought its own contribution to the life of modern Europe. And this would have been to Virgil like saying that good and evil were both divine. He saw a great unity impressed on all life; and though he felt a keen and almost oppressive sympathy with the life that was crushed, still he never faltered in the conviction that loyalty was due to this unity, and that the sacrifice was made for an adequate object. And then to recognise that this unity was to be broken up, that, so far as it was to endure, it was to pass into the realm of the Invisible, and that even as a Church it was again to become an object of attack from the healthy national life, and of repulsion to the true individual conscience—this was impossible to any one who hailed the Empire. Whether the reported request of the dying poet to destroy his poem was due to some dim prophetic anticipations of the verdict of History on the Empire, whether some flash of the inspiration of genius revealed to him the fugitive and injurious character of that dominion his Jove had pronounced eternal, we cannot say. He was fastidious, aspiring, exacting in his ideal; his poem had not received its last touches; perhaps that was all. But if the other feeling had come in, it would have thrown a strange light on his relations to his own time, and to that which was to succeed him.

Virgil, the  
friend of  
the victim

The Virgilian allegiance to authority, divine and human, does not dilute the Virgilian sympathy with its victims.



embraces in a tender compassion all that is weak, all that is sad, something even of what is repulsive. We are taught by Virgil to feel for the hunted deer that flies to die at the feet of the mistress who has tended him,<sup>1</sup> the generous steed that shares the ardour of the fierce Mezentius,<sup>2</sup> and alone attracts his affections; even for the monster Polyphemus,<sup>3</sup> followed by the flock whose devotion forms his sole consolation, and the picture of whose attachment to him brings images of gentleness into what is most savage. Much of all this may be found in Homer, but the change of tone from Homer is made the more striking by the similarity of their material, and in proportion as the reader appreciates the song of each he feels the chasm which divides them. The cheerful bustle of the earlier singer paints a world: the plaintive pathos of his imitator reveals a soul. As we read the *Iliad* we think of Hector, of Achilles, of Priam. As we read the *Æneid* we think of Virgil. We feel always in the poetry of Virgil just that neighbourhood of a suffering human spirit that it is refreshing to miss in the poetry of Homer. A mist of unshed tears seems to haunt the stream of his genius. Sorrow, and endurance, and patience weave themselves into the very web of his verse. He gives a voice to the unhappy, the vanquished; in touching the inmost heart with a sense of pity, he lightens the burden of humanity by reminding us that we bear it in common.

Here we have an explanation of the fact that Virgil has become a legendary precursor of Christianity. In choosing him as his guide through the mysteries of the unseen world Dante was not giving him a totally new position, but

and thus the prophet of Christianity.

<sup>1</sup> *Æneid*, xii. 500.

*Iliad*, x. 858

<sup>2</sup> "Monstrum horrendum, informe, ingens, cui lumen ademptum."

Lan. x. 172.

8. lan.

The x.

proceeding

nature

quite

and in so a case ex-

and cruel

and pity,

expanding many a hint in the previous history of his fame. It appears a strange destiny which has transformed the careful revivalist of a past religion into the prophet of one that was in the future; but in fact, these two things are closely connected; it is his reverence towards the past which has created, or at least which renders harmonious, the legend of his affinity with Christianity. He has translated the blessing on the poor into sympathy with the vanquished; he has made failure pathetic, and lifted Resignation into the region of heroic endeavour. We have compared Virgil with Wordsworth, and it may be said that the poem, where Wordsworth has clothed the idea of Christian resignation in a classic dialect, is no more than the expansion of a few words from the *Æneid*. Laodamia, the wife whose love calls back her husband across the barrier of death, says in many words only what Creusa, the wife whose love causes her herself to pass that barrier, says in a few: "Why this immoderate grief, beloved spouse? It is the will of God."<sup>1</sup> Not certainly the will either of a loving Father or a just Judge, yet still one to which in some sense might be applied the utterance of the pupil he guided through Hell and Purgatory, "In la sua volontade è nostra pace."<sup>2</sup>

There is a passage in the *Æneid* that bears the comparison it invites with one of the most striking parts of the Old Testament. When the servant of Elisha, terrified at the crowd of hostile Syrians, turns to his master for comfort, he is answered by the prayer that his eyes may be opened, and by the sight of the chariots of fire that form the invisible guards of the Holy City.<sup>3</sup> The revelation to Æneas by his Divine mother of the invisible host come not to guard but to destroy the city of doom<sup>4</sup> would be felt not less full of significance and poetry if we could make the comparison fairly. True, the vision of Elisha is full of triumph, and that of Æneas has the aspect of de-

<sup>1</sup> *Æneid*, ii. 776-777.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Kings vi. 17.

<sup>2</sup> Dante, *Paradiso*, iii. 85.

<sup>4</sup> *Æneid*, ii. 589 seq.

spair. But at the core of that despair lies a hope capable of infinite expansion. The gods have indeed deserted Troy: "Let them that are in Judæa flee unto the mountains" is the warning prefigured no less clearly than the vision of Elisha is recalled. But the fall of Troy no less than the fall of Jerusalem precedes a mystic resurrection; from its ashes shall arise a city not unworthy, in the imagination of Virgil, to be set beside all that is loftiest in human achievement. The severity of Heaven, interpreted by Divine Love, must be at all times an idea full of hope and consolation. But many influences when Virgil wrote prepared the mind of humanity to receive this idea with a peculiar welcome. He saw glimmering in the future a mystic vision of Peace;<sup>1</sup> his heart was stirred by yearnings after a blessed unity of all life and all nature, and found this unity for the first time suggested by the world without. Human history embodied the idea of purpose, and Will suggests even when it does not express Love. The mere wide-reaching habit of submission to central power, the stately and growing fabric of universal Law, claimed a sort of reverence that passed into Religion. The Will which allotted victory to this harsh and ruthless power was fixed on a design including the incorporation of the civilised world in a single system of law and order; the establishment of a single rule that was to give peace to a storm-tossed world. And for such an aim, Virgil felt, it was worth while to suffer and to perish; the sacrifice would be made by any one who could realise that gain of which it was the price. As long as we look to the merits and the fate of individuals we see nothing but injustice and wanton cruelty, but the glory of Rome closes every vista, and supplies a purpose for all that was bewildering, and almost a justification for all that is harsh. A single ruler, a single plan, a single goal, a central interest and historic purpose, towards which all life is a progress—

<sup>1</sup> *Eclogue*, iv.

these ideas are enough to give dignity and strength to resignation, if not enough to give life to hope.

He adum-  
brates the  
Divine  
Mother

We gain a clue to the whole meaning of the change that was coming over the world, and to Virgil's part in producing and responding to it, when we note the place that woman takes in the *Æneid*. The *Iliad* is a story of men. Women take a large part in it, as in all vivid dramas of life. But they are mere subordinates, the pictures of Andromache, of Helen, beautiful as they are, occupy the background of interest; they are mere accessories to the male actors. Helen, though she ought to be the principal person of the drama, is a faint delicate sketch, and for the greater part of the poem we are inclined to forget her altogether. But when we turn to the *Æneid* the whole action depends on female influence. Its most impressive figure is the Carthaginian Queen; its central divinity is the Divine Mother. The image of motherly love, glimmering through the storms of life with a continual reminder of Divine care, and a continual claim on human submission, more prefigures that element in Christian faith which was welcomed by the world with the most urgent sense of need, than any of the loftiest utterances of Greek religion. Homer knows nothing of it, the tragedians only hint at it; the mysteries may have cherished it, but it attains its first literary expression in Virgil; and nothing surely distinguishes more clearly the purity of his character and refinement of his genius than the transformation of the ignoble temptress of the *Iliad* into that ideal of almost omnipotent power shown forth in beneficent tenderness, which Christendom for so many ages accepted as its guiding star. The worship of the Virgin seems in the greater part of the poem just trembling into life; it is one of the many respects in which Virgil may be considered in a double sense the poet of Rome. The idea of the Divine Mother links in wondrous harmony the worlds that lie beneath and above humanity. What exalted virtue hardly -



duces in any other relation, the mere conditions of physiology, among average human beings, ensure between the mother and child. Here we reach a law wider than humanity; here we come down to the primal rock of sentient nature, and discern the elements of morality that are older than man. In the mother's love some ocean seems to break through the shallow vessel which holds ordinary love, as though the Infinite came welling through the limitations of individual human nature. It needs the barest hint of permission to justify worship, where such an ideal passes into the Divine world. Out of a few scanty mentions in the Gospels, some of them apparently conveying a distinct warning against the tendency which fed upon them, Christendom made itself a goddess, and transformed its yearnings after what Goethe calls "the eternal womanliness" into the legend of a Virgin Mother. The subjects of Rome welcomed a mother in the Heavens; on earth they knew only a hard master, and the Divine Father had associations that shut out love. The transformation of the goddess of lawless, self-pleasing love into the goddess of a maternal compassionate love forms the clue to the power of Virgil over the ages that were to come; it shows us the imitator of Homer as the teacher of Dante; the transformation of the classical into the Christian ideal of life. The elevation of woman is the symbol of all that is most vital in the change; the new meaning given to the passive side of life comes out in the new honour paid to the passive sex, and the elevation of that sex into the Divine world.

When Virgil wrote, the virtues even of the slave were emerging into a development which Christianity was shortly to recognise and adopt. Obedience to steady systematic power, whether the power be in its own nature good or evil, does bring out certain noble qualities which nothing else can develop. As a Christian martyr's records the story of the gladiators of patient, resolute endurance on the amphitheatre that witnessed

and pre-figures the spirit of the Cross.



to the faith of Christ, witnessed also to power bequeathed by men who had no faith to enlighten their last moments with visions of an opening Heaven. The victim of Roman cruelty, whose only protest was the cry, "I am a citizen of Rome,"<sup>1</sup> died in a spirit that prepared his successors in calamity to triumph in their citizenship of the Heavenly City. The spirit of fortitude thus developed spread beyond the limits of those ideas by which it was nourished. When we read of female slaves enduring the extremity of torture rather than betray the unhappy mistress they could not save,<sup>2</sup> or finding strength to end life under the very hands of the tormentors lest the exquisite anguish should wring from half-conscious lips denunciations of those who were, as the historian reminds us, not bound to the sufferer by blood, and hardly by acquaintance,<sup>3</sup> we feel that the new consecration of suffering and of weakness, the message of the Cross, was realised by those who had never heard it. Rome, the tyrant of the world, taught the lesson of Christ; under its stern and often cruel rule was learnt the power of submission; and that power was ready, when adopted by a new faith, to renew the world.

<sup>1</sup> Cicero, *In Verrem*, v. 62.

<sup>2</sup> Octavia, the wife and victim of Nero (Tacitus, *Annals*, xiv. 60-64).

<sup>3</sup> Epicharis, a freedwoman, in the conspiracy of Piso. "At illam non verbera, non ignes, non ira eo acrius torquentium ne a feminâ spernerentur, pervicere quin objecta denegaret" (*Ibid.* xv. 57). It is one of the few passages in which the historian shows a certain sympathy with the victim.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE AGE OF DEATH

THE law of human progress is a complex one. Change makes itself manifest at first, mainly as loss. A negative succeeds a positive stage, and it is only after long patience that we find the new life develop into some reminiscence of the old. The caterpillar has far more life than the chrysalis, and if our knowledge stopped with the latter stage we should believe that growth was death. The change of moral ideal from ancient to modern life is a change from a lower to a higher form of life; the gain is immense and obvious. In our own day the deadliest war and the worst explosion of crime alike bear witness that ordinary men now recognise a relation among human beings as such, of which the best men of antiquity had no conception. Nevertheless, when we compare our sense of national union with their sense of civil union, we shall often feel "with a great price obtained we this freedom." Perhaps the wider union can never be recognised as the narrower was; perhaps the large ideal must always appear vacillating and imperfect when it is compared with the small. Much more shall we find this if we turn to the period that intervenes between the ancient and modern world; to that age which we may, according to our point of view, call the death of the city or the birth of the nation, but which is most obviously the first. In the dark winter the instincts of corporate life have much less scope than either in the autumn or the spring. Men have never been so isolated since that time. The nation is not the dominant interest that the city was, but still in modern life, as in ancient life, men have

The chrysalis stage of history

felt themselves part of a whole. Only in the epoch of transition was there no bond from man to man, except that which united one man to all men. It is a weak bond if it stand alone. The sense of human kindred, if it know no gradation, is powerless to overcome the repulsions of self-interest or aversion, and to weld separate individuals into a whole that can withstand shocks from without. Even in the best men of that time (who indeed may be reckoned among the best men of any time) we do still discern that poverty of organic relation, without a constant recollection of which the history of the first three centuries of our era is inexplicable.

where  
nothing is  
vital but a  
memory

For in truth the history of the Roman Empire is as much a problem as a narrative. The rule of the bad Emperors is remembered as a type of cruel and oppressive tyranny by persons who have no equally definite ideas of any other. Perhaps the dominion of Nero was not really so oppressive to the mass of the people as that of many less celebrated tyrants; still we have to account for the strange paralysis that lay on the minds of those distinguished men who did suffer and could have resisted. Other tyrants have been supported either by the spell of genius or the authority of hereditary claim. Genius in the first century after Christ seemed extinct, and inherited authority was an idea associated with barbarism and opposed to all the glorious memories of the past.<sup>1</sup> The tyrants of the Roman Empire, the most widespread tyranny the world has ever known, had as little legitimate claim as Napoleon, and as little genius as the Bourbons. Yet no great conqueror or heir to a throne buttressed by tradition has ever been obeyed as they were. Brave and guiltless men, when their death was decreed by the Emperor, heard in vain the appeal of what would seem the irresistible voice of common sense to make use of the common

<sup>1</sup> "Urbem Romam a principio reges habuere. Libertatem et consulatum L. Brutus instituit" (Tacitus, *Annals*, i. 1).

sympathy and the common danger;<sup>1</sup> they submitted to the doom in resisting which they would have found thousands of comrades; they even inflicted it with their own hands at the imperial order. We pause continually in the story of their lives to wonder, to protest, to look for some hidden explanation. Why should a general who had enlarged the boundaries of Roman dominion fall on his spear at the command of Nero?<sup>2</sup> Why should the virtuous sages be sent to the scaffold, bow to his will as to something divine?<sup>3</sup> Because on the side of the oppressor was an ideal of corporate unity, and on the side of the victim was nothing but himself. The traditional loyalty of the State had been transferred to a succession of parvenus, and the filial obedience rendered by the citizen of the Republic was succeeded by the servile obedience rendered by the subject of the Empire. The Emperor had no true strength, but there was no other strength than his. While his victims were mere individuals, in him was incarnate the ideal of the past; he represented the dead Commonwealth; and noble spirits, like the faithful hound, keep a long watch beside a corpse.

The power of resisting tyranny lies in the sense of some organic union between its victims; common suffering does not of itself weld them into a unity. If they feel that nothing is injured but themselves, they may indeed resist what is intolerable, but exactly in proportion as they are good and generous, they will be slow to disturb for the sake of any concern personal to themselves, the advantages produced by any kind of settled order. No number

and the best men foster tyranny more than do the worst

<sup>1</sup> As Rutilius Plautus who incurred the jealousy of Nero, and was its unresisting victim A.D. 62. See Tacitus, *Annals*, xiv. 58, 59, cf. *appeals* Piso, vi. 59, and the *lament* of the historian, xvi. 16.

<sup>2</sup> Corbulo, the conqueror of the Parthians, was killed himself, A.D. 67.

<sup>3</sup> See Seneca, *De Ira*, c. 1, where he speaks of the distance of this punishment from the most heinous crimes, and of the greatest of men being sent to the scaffold. The most striking example is given by the same writer, in a letter to Lucilius, *Epist. ad Lucilium*, c. 1, where he mentions an antedated Pastor, *De Ira*, ii. 13.

of individuals, united only by impulses that slacken in the heart of every man in proportion as he is unselfish, possess a common strength. When men have arisen in successful revolt, they have felt something more than that tyranny was painful; they have been united by the sense that the tyrant could be called to account for the charge of a sacred deposit. When there is no uniting influence on the side of the victims but that common wish for life and ease which is felt by every man, while on the side of the oppressor there is even the ghost of a great idea, the one will be strong, and the many almost powerless. At a time when no far-reaching, deep-rooted national life made a background and shelter for the separate individualities which had formerly owed all their vigour to that background, all that survived of the belief in national life ranked itself on the side of submission to Nero.

The  
Nemesis  
of slavery.

Hence that ideal of resignation, which we have seen in Virgil as the moral bequest of Roman dominion, came under the Empire to gather to itself all the moral energy of the nation, and men were strong only in the virtues of the slave. But it is rather the vices than the virtues bred of submission which impress the student of the first two Christian centuries. We cannot in any other period bring forward, either on so large or on so small a scale, illustrations of a general servility. We need it to explain alike the submission of a world, and also the habits of polite society. No other period has possessed an important and influential class of men who had once occupied the position of menials, and having exhibited the abjectness of slavery as shown in the cringing dependent, revealed its other side in the insolence of the upstart, and the cruelty that is bred of fear. As a slave uttered the loftiest aspirations of that age, so its freed men show forth its warnings. The business of life was servility; those must have succeeded best who had known its lowest depths. Thus the spirit that made the Empire possible was exercised and developed



in all social intercourse; the tastes engendered by slavery at once supplied and demanded attentions void of all other object than the manifestation of servility. The distinction between the freed man and the freeman was one the Roman of that age could never forget; it is one he has left recorded in deeds and words which convey its meaning to all time.<sup>1</sup> Surely genius never stooped so low as in the abasement of men of letters before Nero and Domitian. Perhaps they will in all ages be apt to be found on the side of submission, and inclined, in the face of revolutionary change, to feel that the din of civil tumult interrupts things more precious than it can ever establish, but they never before or since showed the tendency in so base a form. "If all are grateful to him whose overruling power secures untroubled repose," says Seneca,<sup>2</sup> "the man whose leisure is occupied with profound and fertile meditation will surely, considering to whom he owes this priceless treasure, be ready to exclaim, in the words of Virgil's shepherd, 'O Melibœus, a god has given us this repose!'" the god being Nero. Nor did he grudge his life as the price of it, when the claim was made by the god of his ignoble idolatry. The commonplace secular world was useful only as a husk to preserve the little kernel of philosophy; it had no sacredness of its own. If the only important duty of the best of princes was to keep things quiet in order that the philosopher might think and write in peace, it becomes less surprising that Nero was not felt to be the worst.

Men know little of the meaning of a true resignation

The hero  
becomes  
the slave.

<sup>1</sup> The writer who brings out most forcibly the tendencies of a society reinforced from the ranks of slaves is Martial. His epigrams are a testimony to universal habits of mendicancy, while his gross flattery of Domitian (e.g. iv. 1, ix. 4) is something nauseating. Seneca comes very near him. But perhaps the most striking single illustration of this servile spirit, as it was encouraged by Stoicism, is Lucan's flattery of Nero in the opening of the *Pharsalia*, l. 33-66. If all the miseries of the civil wars were the necessary price to pay for the blessing of Nero's rule, says the nephew of Seneca, they were well worth while. The first three books of the *Pharsalia* were published in A. D. 62.

<sup>2</sup> *Epist.* 73. 10; cf. Virgil, *Ecl.* i. 4.

when they imagine it to be the foe of manly activity ; in all achievement lies the latent heat of renunciation. But a true resignation implies an allegiance for the sake of which all that pertains to the Self may be resigned. The dying Socrates preaches such a resignation when he refuses to quit the prison from which escape is easy, and declares that the laws of his city sound in his ears like some strange music deafening him to the appeal of his eager disciple,<sup>1</sup> and forcing him rather to endure the worst that can be inflicted than resist that claim. But when Corbulo, returning from his Eastern conquests, fell on his sword at the command of Nero and ended a life useful to the Empire in order to satisfy spiteful jealousy, he preached the very opposite lesson, warning all who follow his history against the slavish spirit that prepared a world of victims and set a monster on the throne. He shows how hopeless was life even for a successful soldier, when the Commonwealth had ceased to exist.

The gentleman of ancient Rome.

The meagreness and poverty of the private life of antiquity is best seen in the life of which this private side was richest. Cicero is known to us much as we know the hero of a modern biography ; we have his intimate letters as well as public utterances, and know his private opinions almost as well as the facts of his history. In him we came near enough to the life of a Roman gentleman, in order to see the strange gaps which it exhibits as compared with any life among the cultured classes in modern times. Perhaps the most striking change, from this point of view, is the entire lack of what we mean by a sense of honour. We must descend to an uneducated stratum of society before we reach the same bluntness of feeling about acquiring information not meant for the seeker which seems to have characterised the best society of Rome. When a letter not addressed to himself falls into the hands of Cicero and he wishes to know what is inside it, he seems to have felt it natural to

<sup>1</sup> Plato, *Crito*, 54.

break the seal and peruse its contents.<sup>1</sup> The only approach to an apology is his request to the husband of the writer, to whom he mentions the fact, never to let her know what he has done. An inquisitive footman in London would be more embarrassed by the confession than the finest gentleman of Rome. Certainly the lack of honour was not personal; there never was a nature more adapted than that of Cicero for all the fine shades of feeling by which intercourse is kept pure and wholesome. But he belonged to a race which, inasmuch as it took no interest in any individual claim, had no moral attention for any private relation. Everything individual was, as it were, considered in a hurry; the important business of life summoned thought away to other realms, and the group of sentiments and impulses which make up the moral standard of refinement and culture were as little dreamt of among the refined and cultivated classes of Rome as in modern Europe among those crushed by penury, and dulled by arduous and unremitting toil.

The same moral poverty is discernible in a coldness and coarseness of his private relations in other ways. The reader comes with a strange shock on the story of his second marriage; it would be impossible for any equally affectionate modern to have divorced a wife who had been in tender relations with him for thirty years, and immediately married a young heiress. He was evidently the most warm-hearted and considerate of kinsmen, yet his father's death is huddled into a letter of commissions with a brevity which in an intimate communication an Englishman would feel jarring in the announcement of almost any death among kindred; and the betrothal of his beloved Tullia is mentioned with just

Coldness of  
conjugal  
and filial  
relation

<sup>1</sup> See Cicero, *Ad Att.* v. 11. The letter he opened was one from Pilia, the wife of Atticus, perhaps referring to the conjugal troubles of his brother Quintus, who was married to Atticus's sister. "Accepi fasciculum in quo erat epistola Pilæ, abstuli, aperui, legi," is his straightforward account of the matter. Perhaps his advice to his nephew to do the like (*Ad Att.* vi. 3) is even more curious according to modern ideas. As he mentions it to his friend without any expression of regret, he cannot have supposed that he or any one would disapprove of it.

the same apparent carelessness. It is hardly possible to doubt that Cicero was an excellent son; it is certain that he was an excellent father; but private relation was evidently a slighter thing to him than it is to an average man in modern England or France. In his biography we see the difference between a private life enriched by a long tradition of moral interests, and one which is a mere parenthesis in the life of the citizen.

The winter  
of History.

A vacuum has its use in experience as in experiment. When the interests of the citizen came to an end there was both need and space for other interests which in the great classic ages of the early world were crowded out of attention. In the first century of our era the city had perished, the nation was unborn. Athens and Sparta were names as much belonging to glorious memories as if they pointed to actual ruins, each as much a memory then as when Byron wrote—

“The Roman saw these tombs in his own age  
The sepulchres of cities, which excite  
Sad wonder, and his yet surviving page  
The moral lesson bears, drawn from such pilgrimage.”<sup>1</sup>

The sepulchres, no doubt, were stately buildings in complete repair, but had they been what Ephesus or Palmyra is to our eyes, they could not have spoken more eloquently of a life that had passed away. And while the glorious past was already a memory, the rich future was not yet a hope. Britain and Gaul were mere fragments of the Empire; no suggestion prefigured the England and France we know. The Empire itself provided no exercise for the political capacities and energies bequeathed from days when the life of the City was a reality. There was for the subject of the Empire a sense of security which the citizen of antiquity

<sup>1</sup> *Childe Harold*. See the well-known letter of Sulpicius (*Ad Diversos*, iv. 5) on the death of Tullia, to which Byron is here referring, and from which Cicero declares himself to have derived much consolation. “Post me erat Ægina, ante Megara: dextra Piræus . . . quæ oppida quodam tempore florentissima fuerunt . . . tot oppidum cadavera,” &c.

had never known; but that which had made life worth living was gone for ever.

What could occupy the void caused by such a hereavement? Only that which was a unity even in a deeper sense than the City had ever been; a new awakening to the import of that which constitutes a self. There we reach not only *a* unity, but *the* Unity. It may be thought that it is in so special a sense the Unity that there could have been no period of history at which men made the discovery that it was so, but we think thus only when we fail in historic imagination and suppose that human beings must always have possessed that which they bequeath. The Athenian or Spartan felt himself to derive all his worth from his relation to an invisible being which preceded and would survive him, and which he believed immortal—the State. The subject of the Roman Empire could cherish no such belief. He stood in no relation to any city, for Rome had ceased to be a city, she was a world. He was no longer a portion of any other life; he felt for the first time, that he must be himself a whole. He could not any longer say *We* with any fulness of meaning; he began to realise what it is that each man means when he says *I*. The time has long since come to us in modern Europe when we must realise that each man is a whole only so far as he can feel himself also the part of a larger whole. But the first awakening to the meaning of an individual life would have been impossible if it had not been exclusive. The Nation and the Church were hid that man might know the meaning of the soul.

The hope  
of Spring.

For the same reason, if it be not presumptuous thus to formulate the teaching of history, we may say that personal eminence was, during the period here reckoned as the Age of Death, almost quenched. During the period to which that epithet seems applicable—the two centuries intervening between the deaths of Virgil and of Marcus Aurelius, 19 B.C. to 180 A.D.—there were not in the whole civilised world nearly as many names known to all readers

Individuality was more, but individuals were less.



as we find at Athens in the shorter period of her glory. Reckon up the names familiar to everybody in both periods. When we have cited Seneca, Juvenal, Epictetus, Marcus Aurelius, Plutarch, we have finished the list of such names for the latter. If we permit ourselves to add Lucan and Lucian, whose names the ordinary reader often confuses, we still do not make up a decade to match the long list of thinkers, statesmen, historians, generals, poets, and artists who illustrate the brief life of Athens. When we make the comparison we see that a great change has come over the world, and that men were living under a new dispensation, where genius went for less and moral ideas for more. Their minds were turned, alike in the inward and outward world, from the exceptional to the universal. The recoil by which the age rejected that ideal of privilege on which the whole of ancient society was built up, and turned towards the catholic, the common, that which is accessible at all times and in all places, is an example of spiritual evolution. In this twentieth century of our era the most bigoted Tory could not avow the assumption of the best men of antiquity, that the interests of the many should be sacrificed to those of the few. Those who do hold it are either undisguisedly selfish, or else they translate the belief into some theory of its being to the advantage of the many that the few should be considered first. To the finest intellects of the old world the mass of mankind were what animals are to people in our day, beings whom one would consider when nothing particular was at stake, but whom any urgent need or desire would cast out of the reckoning. In the first century of our era an inevitable reaction came over the world. The distinction of Roman and alien, freeman and slave, was felt by the foremost thinkers of the day as out of harmony with the true ideal of humanity. The idea of the State as that which is essentially limited, that which, according to the conditions of ancient life, was connected with something exceptional, inasmuch as it could not

include in its organic framework every human being who came under its sway—this idea gave way to one of the most widely inclusive that has found a name—the idea of Nature. Let us linger over so vast a change.

The injunction to live according to Nature has lost its meaning for us. It might form a motto for the most selfish or the most generous of lives; selfishness and generosity are, to different characters, equally natural. If we would restore the significance which the word possessed for the Roman Stoics, we must learn to regard it, in the first place, as an epitaph on the ideal of ancient life. The city home, a definite enclosure, guarded for its legitimate inhabitants by a list of names, was the most distinct object of loyalty, other than an individual, that was ever presented to men. Nature, on the other hand, is perhaps the vaguest idea that we associate with a single word. It is strange to reflect that about two thousand years after the belief of Life according to Nature came to men as a gospel, John Stuart Mill devoted an essay<sup>1</sup> to the question—What is Nature? How could the Roman Stoics have felt it any gain to live according to something of which Mill, looking back on many centuries of other people's study of it, and his own long life of studying their opinions, declared that he did not know what it was? Because the word came to them as the symbol of a sudden moral expansion which was best expressed by the vaguest of names. It started them on a new path; it carried them far away from that which, they clearly saw, should be left behind. It came with the irresistible charm of a new inspiration to men cumbered and shackled by the ruins of the old; it left the old barriers out of sight, and men for the hour asked no more. To inhabit the city of Zeus instead of the city of Cecrops seemed a wonderful extension given to all possibilities on which the heart of man could dwell; and in their recoil from what was narrow, the men

The selective ideal of antiquity leaves room for its opposite.

<sup>1</sup> *Three Essays on Religion*. See above, p. 128.

of that day failed to discern that in removing the limitations of their ideal home they deprived it of all form. They escaped from the river to the ocean, and forgot that the change would leave them without guidance till they learned to guide themselves by the stars.

Foregleam  
of modern  
democracy.

The breeze of their own high aims, to a certain extent, served to direct them. The words of all thinkers in the age we speak of expressed a lofty humanity. The extreme Radicals of our day do not go beyond them in their recognition of the truth, ignored or denied by heroic Greece, that the sacred thing in man is his humanity. That belief is so entirely a commonplace of our day, that the only difference between the highest Tory and the broadest Radical is as to the fitness of their respective schemes for bringing this fundamental truth into practice. "When you have come to my age, my dear," said Sir Walter Scott to his daughter (who had spoken disparagingly of something she called vulgar), "you will thank God that everything which is supremely precious is common." He was essentially a Tory; his genius was quickened and stirred by all that was exceptional; the pomp of chivalry kindled his imagination, a tawdry imitation of it ruined his life; yet that gentle rebuke to his child expressed the deepest part of his ideal. It is the ideal of the modern world. In the classic world the best of men had just as little sympathy with it as the worst had. In the transitional world of the Empire the claim of humanity, as humanity, was recognised in words by all thinkers, and apparently, as we have seen, more practically by the common people. But the debate in the Senate (where Seneca may have been a listener) which overcame the indignation of an important minority and decided on the slaughter of four hundred innocent slaves measures the actual importance of the feeling. Still, we must repeat, words without deeds, or even against deeds, are not necessarily empty of all meaning. The Enthusiasm of Humanity seemed a greater thing at its birth than it

does now. The very fact that people did not act upon it kept it from perilous shocks. We have seen, after eighteen centuries of the ideal, what it cannot do; to the Roman Stoics it seemed omnipotent. It may be said, that to us, as to them, its true powers are untried; but it has at all events been in the modern world a standard of life steadily advancing in claim, influencing always what men wish to seem, and sometimes, therefore, what they wish to be. Eighteen hundred years ago nothing was known of the difficulties of philanthropy; the idea was unfamiliar, the attempt to carry it out was unheard of. It was possible to think that the attempt would unite the human race with a firmer cohesion than that which bound the Roman oligarchy of the past, and bring into a unity such as that of Rome all that claimed the name of man.

A death is more impressive than a birth; and the fact that an old ideal is perishing must always be a more obvious moral influence than the fact that a new one is coming into life. We always see what we are losing more clearly than what we are gaining; we never indeed see what we have possessed so clearly as in the moment of losing it, and for long afterwards. Hence we find in the first two centuries of our era a set of feelings and beliefs that we best sum up in describing it as the Age of Death. The words may be taken literally; all life seems then to have been coloured by an anticipation of its end. Why, the reader asks continually, this new sense of impressiveness in Death? The sense of hurry in life must be almost coeval with humanity; wherever men have lived they must have found Death as much the interruption as the close of Life. How can it be more significant to one generation than to another, that man is snatched away from all work and interest, often before he has come to any full discernment of their purport, almost always before he is ready to depart? Why at this time do we come upon the sort of occupation of mind about Death which usually occurs only on the

Death of  
the ancient  
State.

discovery of a new truth, which would, if it were possible, suggest that it was new in the world? Because in an important sense Death was new. It had been for the first time in history recognised as an influence in the career of nations. The citizen of the old world shared in the perennial life of a commonwealth, and had no ear for those lessons of mortality which did not touch the more enduring life. The subjects of the Empire had learnt that the perennial life was not eternal. The new scope given to the fact of mortality brought in this new impressiveness to the close of human life. Nothing is so impressive as Death itself, and therefore, for those who live in the full blaze of literary expression, nothing is so trite as reflections about Death. But to the men of the first and second centuries these reflections came like a new revelation. An Englishman, looking back on the vicissitudes of the seventeen or eighteen centuries which separate us from the thinkers of that time, is not more struck than they were by the fact that a State can perish—is not so much struck by it. All the variety of illustration inaccessible to them which we possess of that truth does not equal in impressiveness the mere fact itself when it was recognised for the first time.

Death gives  
the age its  
keynote.

The practical result of this discovery has to be described in language of candid paradox; there never was a time, we may say, when Death was feared, either so much, or so little. Men of genius have never been guilty of equal baseness to escape it. Lucan denounced his mother,<sup>1</sup> Seneca connived at the murder of the Emperor's mother by her son, in both cases merely to escape the fate which a conqueror, with a devoted army at his back, inflicted on himself at the command of Nero. At no other age known to the historian was suicide so common. While Life was bought at a price which to average men of our day would leave it denuded of all value, it was every day

<sup>1</sup> For Lucan's treachery in the conspiracy of Piso, see Tacitus, *Annals*, xv. 56; for Seneca's acquiescence in Agrippina's murder, *ibid.*, xiv. 7.



flung away as a trifle or an encumbrance. Men had lost alike the power of retaining it in the face of discomfort and surrendering it at the call of duty. They had forgotten both the lessons of the dying Socrates; his precept that the soldier must await dismissal at his post, and that far deeper testimony which he had signed with his blood, that whether Death were or were not an evil, there was no such doubt concerning unfaithfulness to the light within. Men prolonged their lives at the cost of infamy, or shortened them at the command of a tyrant, who was himself frightened literally to death by the first touch of resistance. It seems as if they were unable, with any tenacity of resolve, to face either Life or Death.

So strangely mingled are the good and evil tendencies of the age that we may trace in the same man its lowest temptations and its highest aspirations. Few men have played a baser part on the stage of history than Seneca. The murder of a parent surely was never before or since excused by eloquent lips; it would not be easy to find a parallel for his flattery of the living and libel on the dead Claudius; while his enormous wealth could not have been acquired by methods worthy of a philosopher. Yet he has been chosen as a typical "seeker after God," and a spurious but not unnatural legend has made him the friend and correspondent of St. Paul. If we judged him by his words alone we might fancy that nothing was wanting to render the legend a fact except opportunity. Perhaps some conflict between his own baseness and an influence closer than any human being awakened within him that sense of the inalienable value of every soul which is characteristic of all the finer spirits of his age, but nowhere more vividly expressed. This sacredness, he felt, could not be forfeited by the worst of criminals. The doom which the State inflicted on its enemy was no longer to be regarded as the mere rejection of something vile, but as a concession to the necessities of the criminal

Seneca  
and the  
sense of the  
value for  
the indivi-  
dual spirit.

himself. The State could not take the life of the worst of her sons, even for the good of all the rest, if it were not also good for him. "Thy soul"—Seneca addresses an imaginary criminal<sup>1</sup>—"is incurable; it has woven itself a warp and woof of crime. Sin has become its own motive. All we can do for thee is to give thee that which for thee is the sole good—death." It is the claim of the individual which is considered here, even when the individual is a public enemy. How completely is the ideal of antiquity left behind! The criminal has been a mere invader in the view of the City State; his welfare was no more to be considered than that of a wolf in the fold; all that was sacred lay in that which he was doing his best to destroy. As we read these words of Seneca we feel that the moral centre of gravity has shifted. The City had demanded loyalty in word and deed, but men now became conscious of belonging to one whose demand included the hidden things of the heart. "God is near thee, with thee, within thee; a holy Spirit watches our good and evil."<sup>2</sup> No individual endowment was needed to confer a priceless value on every human soul; each was the work of one whose care for his workmanship was but faintly typified by the affectionate brooding of the artist over his work; every man was sacred, for every man was the work of God.

Immortality becomes a widespread belief;

As an inevitable result of such a conviction, the question of man's immortality began to occupy attention. It is an inevitable interest for an Age of Death. It is easy not to think of Death, but few can think of Death without asking whether it be the end of desire and fear; or a great crisis in the development of all desires and fears. Thus the general disintegration and decay which made Death an object of attention quickened the yearnings after immortality into new vividness. We see them pierce

<sup>1</sup> *De Ira*, i. 16, 3.

<sup>2</sup> *Ep.* 41.

the husk of worldly frivolity;<sup>1</sup> we find them in the recognition given to the hopes cherished by those races with which Rome was now for the first time coming into contact, and to whom belonged the world of the future. Death was, the Romans discovered, regarded by the mystic priests of the Gauls as "an incident in a long life,"<sup>2</sup> and the poet who was afterwards to attempt to buy his life at so hideous a price records their confidence with a sigh of envy. Why, it may be asked, should Lucan envy the Druids a faith which he might have taken from Virgil? The expression just quoted supplies the answer. It was new to regard Death as an incident in a long *life*. Some dim survival in a mysterious underworld was the ancestral belief of the race. Virgil had deepened and illumined the picture drawn by Homer with gleams of a purer radiance and shadows of more sombre significance, but had left it still a mere epilogue to the life of this world. We see in this longing mention of the Druidic belief how the world was beginning to thirst for something beyond this; how men were yearning for a future that should not merely reflect in pallid memories the life of earth, but should carry on all that had begun here into new development, and fill out the hopes and aspirations of earth with achievement. "Happy are they in their delusion," sighs Lucan; he yearned to share, even as a mere dream, the hope with which life would be no longer empty. Shut out from the life of the State, a life to which there was no definite term, men were awakening to the discovery that if man's existence were an intelligible whole, it could not end with the threescore years and ten of his sojourn here.

We misunderstand the hope of immortality when we

It is an intuition, not an anticipation.

<sup>1</sup> Several times in the most frivolous writer, I should think, who ever used the Latin tongue. See Martial, v. 34. a pretty little poem on the death of a child.

<sup>2</sup> Lucan, *Pharsalia*, i. 457.

look upon it as a mere anticipation. It is rather an actual discernment of some principle of growth disproportionate to its environment, and suggesting a different scheme of existence from the outward one. The prospect of Immortality was, in the age of classical antiquity, a dim and not specially attractive anticipation, detached from all experience interesting to the hearts of men. When that great age was past, Immortality became a belief necessary to render life harmonious and explicable; a refuge for that need of permanence formerly supplied by the life of the State, now first discovering its true soil within the spirit of individual man.

The Stoic  
slave trans-  
figures the  
idea of  
Freedom

It tells forcibly for the wide-reaching influence of the new spirit of personality that we should find it hard to decide which of two men occupying the extremes of society offers its typical expression. On the whole we find the best literary exponent of the time in the Emperor Marcus Aurelius. But the slave Epictetus, besides being an earlier and therefore more original preacher of the new morality, had in his bondage a position for enforcing it which is unique in the history of thought. He was set apart by the discipline of life to proclaim what we may call the inverted freedom of the invisible. His experience of bondage exhibited to him the true character of bondage; he saw its limitations; he saw that within the man which it could not touch. We must allow that he enormously exaggerated that within the man which it could not touch.<sup>1</sup> He and his spiritual brethren made the same mistake with regard to the Will as that which we find in Plato with regard to the intellect. Epictetus believed in the omnipotence of volition as Plato in the omnipotence of knowledge; perhaps it was the only way in which the

<sup>1</sup> See especially *Diss.* ab Arr. ii. 23, where he takes the power to close the eyes as a typical specimen of the relation of Will over Sense. We may, he seems to think, in like manner shut off all impression from without, if we will but make the resolve to do so.

scope of either faculty could be adequately discerned by him whose mission it was to impress its meaning upon the world. The luminaries of the spiritual as well as of the material universe seem larger at their rise than at their zenith, and all new ideas are expanded in an atmosphere of dawn. We, after ages of speculation, discern that Moral Freedom is, as it has been called,<sup>1</sup> the freedom of a bird in its cage; and that what a man can be depends to a certain extent upon what he can do. We cannot but allow that some part of Character is the inevitable result of Circumstance. And yet, as we listen to the teaching of Epictetus, we may feel his truth the deeper one. We may believe that what strikes us as exaggeration after seventeen hundred years of an individual morality was, in the first freshness of that new life, the discernment of a real possibility—a moral miracle, worked by the preacher of a new Faith.

The contrast between persons and things forms the whole subject-matter of the philosophy of Epictetus; there is in it no wealth of various thought, only a single idea repeated again and again with very little change even of dialect. Nor have the fragments of his teaching which have been reported to us any autobiographic interest; it is owing to this defect that Marcus Aurelius is so much more interesting and so much better known to the modern world. But the idea thus monotonously dwelt upon by Epictetus is one of those which needed to be brought home to the heart and conscience of mankind by exclusive claim and insistent proclamation. A slave was in the eyes of the ancient city a mere thing; by the doctrine of Epictetus, he was for ever reclaimed for the personal world. Read Aristotle's views on slavery,<sup>2</sup> on the whole we may say the most liberal and humane utterance of classic ages referring to that unhappy class, and then turn to any page of Epictetus, and you feel at once that you have

and pre-  
pares the  
abolition of  
slavery

<sup>1</sup> By Professor Clerk Maxwell.

<sup>2</sup> See the discussion already referred to, *Politics*, 1253-1255.



crossed an ocean. Wilberforce and Clarkson have hardly done more to break the chain of the slave than Epictetus has. Aristotle did nothing to break it, he did something to bind it. The teacher who proclaims (as he did) that only those men should be entrusted with freedom who deserve it rivets the chains of the bondsman, for he fixes men's attention on the disqualifications which slavery creates and extends. He, on the other hand, who treated the outward slavery as a thing indifferent in comparison with that of the inward life, while he might seem to leave space for the outward bondage to continue, really sowed the slow-germinating seed of a late emancipation. The servile insurrections which, rather more than two centuries earlier, had made Rome tremble, would have found no recruit in Epictetus. But as Renan says of one who may be considered as the spiritual descendant of Epictetus—the slave-girl and martyr Blandina—he did more to abolish slavery than Spartacus did. To enforce the doctrine that the only real bondage is that of the Will is to take a step towards destroying all other bondage. It makes impossible that condition in which it seems to acquiesce. In fixing the attention on a higher Freedom it claims the slave as a Person, and prepares the way for proclaiming his enslavement as a crime.

Good and  
evil begin  
with Will.

'The clue to a right understanding of our moral being, in the belief of Epictetus, is the discernment that good and evil are both to be sought in the realm of the Voluntary. 'The necessary world is the outward world,<sup>1</sup> the world where many are stronger than one, where accident reigns, where Will is impotent. This world, properly understood, must be regarded as the realm of indifference. In this region there is no true good or evil;<sup>2</sup> here, according to the point of view, we may say that everything is good, or else that nothing is

<sup>1</sup> Ποῦ τὸ ἀγαθόν ; 'Ἐν προαιρέσει. Ποῦ τὸ κακόν ; 'Ἐν προαιρέσει. Ποῦ τὸ οὐδέτερον ; 'Ἐν τοῖς ἀπροαίρετοις (*Epicteti Diss. ab Arr. ii. 16*). This is the kernel of almost all he has to say.

<sup>2</sup> External things should be to us no more than *tesserae* with which we play at dice (*Ibid. ii. 5*).

good. In the realm of the Voluntary, on the other hand, every step we take is towards good or evil. Not what happens to a man, but what he chooses, is the proper object of desire or fear. The work of Philosophy, therefore, is to effect a complete inversion of the ordinary view of these two regions. We are like stags, terrified by feathers<sup>1</sup> and driven into snares. We seek to escape fancied evil in the realm of Necessity, and fly into real evil in the realm of the Voluntary. We choose crime to escape exile or death, though in exile or death there is nothing evil, and crime is the greatest of evils. We mistake the material of Virtue for the source of Vice. We turn away blindly from the very threshold of Liberty. What is Liberty? Life in accordance with desire. Men strive to gain this universal object by bending things to their wishes, and they strive in vain. 'The world is so made that it cannot be remoulded upon the tastes and fancies of men; as long as men persist in this effort they are in bondage, they are subjected to the rule of hard masters, forcing them to actions in which their will has no part. The will is not the lord of the outer world. When exerted here, it constantly finds itself a slave, and not a ruler. But let it turn to its own domain and it finds itself at once supreme. Though it is not possible to remould the world to fit desire, it is possible to remould desire to fit the world. He who has learnt to desire nothing that he may not choose has entered into the region of perfect Freedom.

At the root of this idea of the contrasted worlds of servitude and of freedom lies a deep religious reverence for the Order of Nature, such as we have seen on its intellectual side, in the poem of Lucretius,<sup>2</sup> and closely akin to that which was the bequest of Rome to the world in its Law. The outer world is the world of necessity; it is the unchangeable world. But also it is the world which, if we

The world of Order claims man's submission.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* II. 1

<sup>2</sup> It is interesting to remark that in the marginal annotations with which Bentley has enriched a copy of Epictetus now in the British Museum, the only comparison is with Lucretius.

rightly understand it, we shall not wish to change.<sup>1</sup> No exponent of modern Science confronts the world of existing reality with a more absolute conviction that in a knowledge of its laws lies a sure deliverance from all the ills of life. Epictetus knew nothing of the powers with which modern Science has equipped the will of man in his dealings with the external world; but his confidence in the power of Truth to bring the mind to a condition in which any modification of outward things should appear a matter of indifference gave to Knowledge quite as high a place as the modern view does—perhaps a higher place. The powers of Science, as revealed to our time, have done almost all that magic had ever promised; even the limitations of time and space seem to disappear before them. But the weak and helpless man, as Epictetus conceived him, in face of the unchangeable, was more invincible among the terrors of the outward world than is his modern descendant. His power to cope with them lay in another region; he could not transform those dangers; but none can transform them all, and he did not need to transform any. To Epictetus the dangers and necessities of the material universe were but as the discomforts of the palæstra,<sup>2</sup> leading up to the disciplined strength which was to equip the victor for the contest of a nobler Olympia. He loves to surround the trials and struggles of life with associations of dignity and charm borrowed from the Greek games. These majestic and venerable institutions, the concentrated reminiscence and type of the dignity, the beauty, the grandeur, dear to the pride of Greece, appeared to the Phrygian slave, as to his contemporary St. Paul, a parable symbolising that which God had intended the whole outward world to be to man, and the actions of other men to be to each individual. To the meanest slave the circumstances amid which he was placed were an Olympia, where Divine spectators looked on at the struggle and applauded the conquest of which (in

<sup>1</sup> *Diss.* ab Arr. ii. 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* i. 24.

this unlike its prototype) no rival could deprive him. He had but to will in order to quit that short contest a triumphant conqueror. No outward impediment could affect the result, for the victory lay within a region to which outward influences could not penetrate. They brought the mere apparatus for preparing him for the contest; for that contest itself nothing was necessary except his own choice.

But the choice itself was one needing that discipline which comes from the knowledge of Law. To Epictetus the fact that man's will should be a disorderly, unscientific influence seemed a part of that strange dislocation which it is the business of Philosophy to set right. While the outward world is under the influence of some fixed law, so that we know, for instance, the weight of anything, not by holding it in our hands and consulting our sensations, but by weighing it in scales, how is it, he asks, that in the most important matter of all, the preference and desires of men, we can form no judgment, but can only watch in each individual case the varying, accidental response of chance preference, as if in every case of contested weight<sup>1</sup> we could only ask the opinion of a bystander whether a particular object were light or heavy? The moral world is no more subject to chance than the material world; indeed, in the view of Epictetus, for whom chance had a real meaning, it was far less so. A pound weight is a pound weight in the hand of a child or a giant. So in this Stoic philosophy motives have their absolute value, whether they appeal to the mind of a Socrates or of some base courtier of Nero. Socrates knows that it is better to die than to be false to the highest that is discerned as truth; the cowardly sycophant thinks that death is worse; but the intrinsic merit of the alternatives remains the same in either case. The scale is not altered when it is overlooked. The Order of Nature is beyond the reach of our choice; we have only to conform

Law and  
Liberty  
alies.

<sup>1</sup> Compare Persius, v. 100.

ourselves to it, or to suffer the consequences. It may, in an important sense, be asserted that Epictetus was the first to preach this truth. Of course, no one can have ever taught his fellows anything of real moral value without assuming it; but it is not so impressive anywhere else, as in the teaching of the enfranchised slave. Epictetus had known all that men dread—blows, ill-usage, tyranny, hard labour, need—and he proclaimed that these were not evils. Who else had such a platform for making that declaration? Who else had, as he expresses it forcibly, so entirely turned round the masks by which mankind are terrified, and seen whether there was anything really terrible behind them? Of the words of such as him we may say, indeed, as one Italian poet said of another, "*Egli dice cose, e voi parole.*"<sup>1</sup> He shows the perfect freedom that is bound up with the ideal of perfect resignation. He speaks as the heir of an inheritance hitherto inadequately though deeply prized, of an estate rich in unsuspected mineral wealth, a possession coveted by all, in ignorance of its actual advantages. Freedom had been the yearning of all hearts, but men had coveted the freedom which was the privilege of few; the freedom he proclaimed from his platform of servitude was the inalienable inheritance of every son of man. The citizen had accepted Law as the basis of Liberty; the philosopher could do no more; but in the inward realm in which he learned to find a home, the law which gives perfect freedom is that of renunciation. His aim should be to withdraw all energy from that spirit of preference which would impress the idiosyncrasies of the Self on the world of Nature, and impress the law of Nature on the Self. Epictetus was as free when a master could kill or torture his body as when he knew no master, for the emancipation from the tyrants of the soul was in him complete. The saying of Socrates, "Anytus and Meletus can kill me, but cannot hurt me," is the constant text of his discourse; in those words Socrates had proclaimed

<sup>1</sup> Berni, of Michael Angelo.



the freedom of the slave. "Let us be imitators of Socrates, who sang pæans in his dungeon,"<sup>1</sup> was in him no mere sermonising, it was the exhortation of one who knew that what he exhorted was possible. He had taken his start from that complete surrender which he was urging on his disciples; he had been detached by the decree of Fate from all those possessions from which the soul should always be detached by a sense of their insignificance; he had been shut off from the realm of the indifferent by circumstance, and had thus no choice but to find his good elsewhere, if he were to find any good at all.

The bondage of the freedman taught the lesson no less decidedly, and of course far more frequently, than the spiritual emancipation of the slave. The crowds who pressed across the boundary that separated bond and free exhibited in every variety of distinctness the temper of bondage; the demeanour of the freedmen taught the spectator that "No mere ceremony can change a menial to a true Freeman; there are other masters than those from whom the prætor's rod sets free." This was said by one who must have had many slaves, who looked on Roman life from the platform of luxury and culture. The obscure, abrupt, and rather pedantic utterances of Persius contrast strikingly with the broad simplicity of Epictetus, but the two preach with similar fervour and identical aim the discovery—to them it was a discovery—of spiritual freedom. "Our one need,"<sup>2</sup> says Persius, "is Freedom, but not such freedom as belongs to any enfranchised slave whom the ceremony of manumission has elevated to the rank of a Roman citizen." "Avarice and Luxury enforce a harder toil than the most severe master, and add to it the distraction of their own discord." He was proclaiming a

Persius, the  
Stoic poet.

<sup>1</sup> Epictetus, *Diss.* ab Arr. ii. 6. It is a very exaggerated expression for anything that Socrates did say, no doubt.

<sup>2</sup> Paraphrase of a long passage in Sat. v. 73 seq. The style of Persius is so odd and so extremely diffuse that it seems to me impossible to quote from him otherwise.

truth which received clearer illustration in a world of freedmen than it ever could in a world of freemen. And then, moreover, while at all times men have been able to observe the slavery of those outwardly free, it is, so far as we know, only in the lifetime of Epictetus that they have been forced to recognise the freedom of the slave; and the lesson thus set forth in actual experience has reached, not only the ears, but the heart of mankind.

Marcus  
Aurelius  
the Exile.

The thinker in whom this new sense of an inward life finds its most characteristic expression for the ages which follow, is, however, not the Stoic slave, but the Stoic Emperor. In making the transition it is striking to discover a change of moral atmosphere just opposite to that which we should expect from the circumstances of the two writers. Profound sadness succeeds to a bright and steadfast cheerfulness. Partly we have to remember that Marcus Aurelius wrote for himself, and Epictetus addressed disciples; but the difference is no mere accident of method. A sense of pettiness, of worthlessness in life, which had no place in the thoughts of the slave, oppressed the ruler of the world. Epictetus felt life a sojourn in a strange land,<sup>1</sup> but the sense of exile was lost in the sense of freedom. With Aurelius, the sense of freedom was lost in the sense of exile. He came later in the new life, when the mystery of dawn was over, and the cold light of day was revealing the earth and concealing the stars. But another explanation of the contrast is to be found in the very circumstances which at first sight make it surprising. The master of the Roman world knew too surely how little Will could effect in face of overwhelming difficulties. He had no wish but for the welfare of the great Empire he was called on to rule, and he saw that his wish was vain. What he felt was the unique and profound disappointment of the Philosopher on a throne. Plato at Syracuse may, perhaps, have known something of the

<sup>1</sup> See a passage in *Enchiridion*, ch. xii., where Epictetus says life should be the saunter on shore of a passenger who has landed for an hour or two.

feeling; he must have discovered how little the approach there made towards his own ideal<sup>1</sup>—that kings should become philosophers, or philosophers kings—had done for the happiness of mankind. But with the Emperor that dream was realised more fully than it had been realised under the rule of Dion; he knew better how little the Philosopher on a throne could do to make his subjects wise and good, or even happy. To him the whole of life must have been coloured and shaped by disappointment; his sense of its transitoriness seems a refuge from his sense of its futility. "Reflect often on thy last hour," is the burden of the *Meditations*. Life is a vapour, a smoke, a winter torrent; the interval between the shortest and the longest life, is comparable to that between the disappearance of two grains of incense flung into the altar fire. Life hurries to its close; its futilities are soon to be hushed in the silence of the tomb: why make ado about anything so ephemeral?<sup>2</sup>

The *Journal Intime* of Marcus Aurelius may be regarded, from some points of view, as a deeper revelation of an individual soul than almost any other book that was ever written. As we turn the page we find ourselves overhearing,

The monarch is more catholic than the slave,

<sup>1</sup> See Wordsworth's poem on Dion:—

"And what pure homage *then* did wait  
On Dion's virtues, while the lunar beam  
Of Plato's genius, from its lofty sphere,  
Fell round him in the grove of Academe,  
Softening their inbred dignity austere.

Mourn hills and groves of Attica! and mourn  
Ilissus, bending o'er thy classic urn!  
Mourn, and lament for him whose spirit dreads  
Your once sweet memory, studious walks and shades!"

No history is more tragic than that commemorated in these lines. Dion was surely the noblest pupil of Plato, and the attempt to establish a righteous government at Syracuse, in which he incurred the hatred of those whose welfare was his supreme aim, and fell a victim to their wrath, must have seemed to his master almost like a great experiment exhibiting the futility of his loftiest hopes.

<sup>2</sup> M. Antoninus, x. 31; iv. 15; v. 23.

for the first time, the communings of a human spirit with itself. It is this which Renan must mean when he says of the book, "C'est le livre le plus purement humain qu'il y ait." Those who take it up with that introduction will be apt to lay it down with disappointment. It is not human in the sense that it makes any approach towards the various, many-sided utterance which belongs to a complete human character; it contains no trace of subtle observation; we never come to a thought that makes us stop to say, "There is the man who knew mankind." Except so far as we are now and then reminded that a court must have the same dangers in all ages, we find nothing in it that bears on the concrete difficulties and temptations of particular bodies of men or of individuals. But it is human in this sense, that it opens to us those depths in a human soul which belong to humanity as such; not to the second century or to the twentieth century, not to the Italian or English race, not to the king or the slave, but to a human soul at all times and in all places, wherever it is made conscious of its own personality, wherever it is led to retire into its own depths, and commune with that which no circumstance can touch. This spiritual attitude is not characteristic of the most important periods of history; a great man's own personality is not there an object of supreme interest to himself. It is characteristic of an Age of Death, and most completely exhibited in one, who even in that age of disintegration must have been the loneliest of men.

but also  
more  
solitary

All monarchs must be solitary in some sense, but a monarch in modern Europe is a member of a select society; he is one of a band of equals. The Emperor was alone in the world. We see in a Caligula or a Tiberius the moral insanity which results from such unnatural isolation; in Marcus Aurelius that influence is traceable in a freezing loneliness, a sense of almost despair, softened into resignation. He was as lonely in literary communion as in the intercourse of society and the commerce of daily life; he

was not likely to know the Psalms, and there was then nothing else at all like his *Meditations*. In some ways he is curiously modern, and to the modern reader this tells as a disadvantage. He was the first to come in sight of certain ideas that the modern world has dwelt on and returned upon until they have become commonplace, and we turn from many of his most original reflections as tedious, because they spring from a seed that has been eminently fertile. The writer whom he oftenest recalls is Pascal. A deep mournfulness, a sense of transitoriness and futility in all things earthly, an utter detachment from all interest in the fleeting pageant, seems set to exactly the same key in the thoughts of the Frenchman and the Roman; we should hardly discover the difference if, as we resumed perusal, the one book were exchanged for the other. "*Comme tout disparaît dans un instant! dans le monde les personnes, et dans la durée les souvenirs! comment des objets si frivoles, si decousus pourraient ils occuper notre intelligence et notre raison.*" That is not Pascal, but Marcus Aurelius speaking through a French translation. He returns to the thought again and again with a persistence which reminds us that it was an original one to him. "*Serait-ce la vaine opinion des hommes qui t'agite? alors regarde l'oubli rapide de toutes les choses, l'abîme du temps pris dans les deux sens*" (i.e. the boundless past and the boundless future) "*et l'exiguité du lieu où la renommée se renferme.*" It is exactly the feeling of Pascal, but it has a typical impressiveness which Pascal lacks. There speaks the man who has touched the limits of all earthly desire. Is there any one else, since the line of his successors came to an end, of whom we may say that it was impossible for him to frame a wish for any earthly gain? Kings in the modern world have not been shut out from ambition; they have seen a height above them. But the master of the Roman world had touched the summit of earth, and if he found it joyless, there was no refuge but in the world within.



and more  
hopeless.

Hence Marcus Aurelius could not but ask,—Is there no Life that deserves the name of Life more truly than this brief span here? But the question expresses a yearning, not a hope. “How is it,” he writes at a time apparently not long before his death, “that the gods, who have arranged all things well and lovingly for mortals, have in this one respect overlooked their interest, that men, even excellent men, who have entered into frequent communion with them through devout ministrations, when once they have died quit existence altogether, and are utterly extinguished? If indeed this is so, be assured that the gods would have arranged it otherwise, if it had been right. For it would have been possible if it had been right.”<sup>1</sup> Surely there is nothing more pathetic in literature than these words. The ruler of the civilised world, feeling all the emptiness and poverty of that life of which he occupied the summit, yet teaches himself to acquiesce in its narrow limits, since they were imposed by God.

The  
supreme  
Law.

Two ideas upheld him in this dreary and joyless resignation—the sense of an Order of Nature, and the sense of a constant invisible companionship. The second was the nearest his heart, but both were near. It is a deeply rooted thought in him that all sin is schism, that we are called upon to be one with the order in which we live, and one in an organic sense, “a member, not merely a portion.”<sup>2</sup> We may, he believed, learn to regard disastrous events as parts of an orderly system, no less than the rose in summer and the harvest in autumn.<sup>3</sup> He paints with all the associations of horror familiar to a soldier the wretched condition of the severed limb,<sup>4</sup> and reminds himself of the possibility that each one of us may enter on this condition at any moment. In the constant disappointment provided for regal beneficence by the neighbourhood of ingratitude, stupidity,

<sup>1</sup> M. Antoninus, xii. 5: *Εἰ γὰρ δίκαιον ἦν, ἦν ἂν καὶ θύνατον.* We see here, as sometimes with St. Paul, how the sound helps the sense.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* vii. 13.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* iv. 44.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* viii. 34.

and treachery,<sup>1</sup> the thought of this larger whole, the discernment of a community wider even than his own vast Empire, in which a Roman citizen could, for the first time, recognise himself as a fellow-citizen of all men, seems to have been a perpetual source of religious thankfulness to him. He knows neither a Father in Heaven nor a brother on earth; but the Order of Nature, in its new and unexplored impressiveness, filled all that vacuum, and almost satisfied him with its realm of majestic Law. It is not inconsistent to speak of its new impressiveness, although when Marcus Aurelius lived this idea was set forth in a poem about as old for him as *Paradise Lost* is for us. It was new if we remember that we are speaking of ideas as they are felt apart from genius. We have seen in Lucretius the rise of a reverence for Nature that may be called modern, the sense of a calm permanent sway, contrasted with that "fitful fever" of personal dominion which raged so furiously in the lifetime of the poet, or with the transient rule of the cities of the past. We have seen in Virgil how the rise of the Empire harmonised this idea with that of political dominion, and translated, as it were, the Order of Nature into the rule of Rome. The Laws of Imperial Rome, so far as they approached their ideal, were, for the men of that time, the laws of Nature.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps without Roman Law we might never have known the expression, "a law of nature." Whether we should be any poorer for the loss is another question; some may think that the meaning of Law would be clearer if the same word were not used to express orders of sequence which impose themselves and cannot be broken and claims which may but ought not to be rejected. At any rate it is significant that the subordination of the whole known world to a single ruler and a single law gave a certain religious significance to the idea of Nature. The outward

<sup>1</sup> *ἐκ τοιούτοις βίον ἀπέρχονται, ἐν ᾧ αὐτοὶ οἱ κοινῶναι, ὑπὲρ ὧν τὰ τοιαῦτα ἠγωνισάμεν, πύδαμεν, ἐφρόντισα, αὐτοὶ ἐπειροὶ ἐθέλουσι με ὑπάγειν* (*Ibid.* x. 36). Perhaps he was thinking of his son.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* iv. 4

world thus seemed to combine in a single majestic order, a fit object for the reverence and the submission of the most religious of mankind. "The world is a polity, for men have the same law," is one of the many sentences which remind us of the expansion taken by the very word Law, while the words were true also in their narrowest sense. Under the Antonines there was only one law in the world. The Roman Law, with its long vista into the past, with its magnificent embrace for all the nationalities of the known world, may be regarded as a stately bridge between the realm of Morals and Nature—a bridge on which the pilgrim may cross in either direction, finding himself on both sides within the same realm of order, and among inhabitants who, if they occasionally used a different dialect, seek to express by it the same desires, the same fears, and the same convictions.

The  
invisible  
Comrade.

But the religion of Nature was not the strongest feeling in this Pascal of the second century; his spirit finds an even deeper satisfaction in a belief not entirely in harmony with it, though both were real to him. We have seen that his yearnings after an Eternal life were unable to transform themselves into hopes, but they found another refuge in the conviction of a permanent relation to an Eternal Being; a truth, indeed, which, when it is fully apprehended, is seen to be inseparable from the hope he could not attain. Marcus Aurelius saw something in man which virtually implies his immortality, though he could not follow out its teaching. He seems to have been much impressed by the belief of the wisest man of antiquity in special supernatural guardianship; a belief which, in his own time, lost its limitations. It had seemed natural that to Socrates a supernatural guide should be appointed, but now men were ready to acknowledge that the best gifts of Heaven were least special; the "divine sign" with which Socrates was familiar was recognised as the voice of an indwelling spirit given as a comrade and guide to every son of man. The change from the Dæmon of

Socrates to the Dæmon of Marcus Aurelius gathers up the whole moral evolution of the ages. We interpret best the meaning of the earlier and the later epoch, when we remember that, in the first, it was the wisest of men who believed that a peculiar guidance was vouchsafed him by God; and, in the second, this guidance was felt as no special endowment of wisdom or virtue, but an inheritance of commonplace humanity.

For indeed it was the distinctive characteristic of this time that the exceptional was exchanged for the universal. This was the very meaning of the new sense of Humanity that was come into the world. The spirit of antiquity, we have said, is selective. The nobler a Greek or Roman was, the more would he incline to associate the excellent with the exceptional. The citizen who was to-day a man, to-morrow a chattel, kept before the mind of every human being the standard of privilege. No one could ask why this man should have some good thing lacked by his neighbour without questioning the foundation and structure of society; for what good could be greater or more absolutely limited than Freedom? That recognition of a Divine voice, therefore, which seems to have had much influence in the condemnation of Socrates, as the introducer of new gods, was not in him or his contemporaries an expansive influence.<sup>1</sup> There was nothing strange to Socrates in believing that a Divine influence should be real and exceptional. But the lapse of six centuries brought men to a different view of the Divine education of humanity; the insignificant nature of that which does not belong to all was the characteristic moral discovery (so we may call it) of the age; it was held with the passionate fervour and the inevitable exaggeration that belongs to new truth. And none could feel this truth with more depth and fervour of conviction than the lonely Emperor;

The  
dæmon of  
Socrates  
and of  
Marcus  
Aurelius

<sup>1</sup> It is rather misleading to speak of the dæmon of Socrates, as he always alludes to it in this impersonal form. The dæmon of Marcus is always personal, *e.g.* iii. 5, &c.

he who found in the exceptional position he occupied no satisfaction, no immunity from sorrow and care, only added causes of both, added difficulties, added vexations. "Even in a palace life may be lived well." The man who wrote those words on a page intended for no eye but his own was one to feel vividly that if God gave guidance to any one, then it must be the inheritance of every son of man.

Many  
persons in  
one man.

We are accustomed to speak of the so-called Athanasian creed as a mass of absurd contradictions. The assertion that there are three persons in one God, it is supposed, is one that can convey no meaning to any mind anxious to find appropriate meaning in all words. And yet it must be felt at times by those who look within that something very like this incredible description of God is true of man. No one can feel that anything within himself is sacred if he believes only in himself; the sense of rightness is something deeper, more authoritative, than anything can be that is wholly contained within an individual personality. In entire solitude each one of us may become sensible of the presence of what may be best described as an ideal Self. Conscience, that "knowledge with another" awaking at the approach of evil, is but one aspect of this unseen companionship; it may be recognised elsewhere than on the watershed of right and wrong, while there is much experience other than that of wrong-doing, in which it is hidden. The whole life of the outward conceals this unseen companionship, and most of all that is satisfying life, in which a man enters into relation with the State. It is most known probably to the lonely; to the Stoic Emperor it took the aspect of an influence so subtle, so penetrating, that it seemed impossible to describe without falling into contradiction. Sometimes on his page it appears as the protector, sometimes as the protected;<sup>1</sup> it is a being that both guards

<sup>1</sup> Compare, for instance, ii. 17: *τηρεῖν τὸ νέκρον δαίμονα ἀνύβριστον, καὶ δαωῆν*, with such passages as iii. 5; v. 27.



man and is guarded by him. It is nearer to him than any other human being is, but it is distinct from himself, and may be an object of reverence to a man who feels himself utterly poor and feeble. It is strange, when we read the passages in which Marcus Aurelius speaks of it, to think of him as a persecutor of the Christians, for the thought of a mediator between God and man comes out as distinctly in his *Meditations* as in any Christian writings. He is a preacher of the doctrine of the Holy Ghost, as the inward companion of every son of man. He did not see that an immortal and inseparable comrade is a promise of immortality. But he teaches that lesson to all who have ears to hear it.

Men's aspirations contain an inverted history of their lives; what has been missed from earth is projected on to the Heavens. The age of slavery was the age when all that men desire and hope was gathered up in the one word Freedom. It was a word which had always expressed "our being's end and aim" more fully and definitely than that aim has ever been expressed by the word Happiness. When every one is more or less free the idea of Freedom is always vague, unless it is strictly relative. But to the Greek and Roman the meaning of Freedom was kept definite by the neighbourhood of its opposite; with us the criminal does not so clearly exhibit its absence as with them the slave. There is no distinction in the modern world so definite and so universal as the distinction between liberty and bondage in antiquity. Freedom occupied the desires of mankind through the ages of the classical world as no equally definite object has ever occupied them since then, and when the classical world came to an end its ideal was only intensified in being spiritualised. Inheritance in the world of the Invisible is secure; if not always unmistakable. "We feel," it has been well said,<sup>1</sup> "as our ancestors thought, and think as our descendants

Civil and  
spiritual  
freedom.

<sup>1</sup> *Jewish Ideals*, by Joseph Jacobs, p. 42.

will feel." The fathers would not always recognise their legacy in the wealth of the sons. The heroes of the past might have disclaimed all parentage in the conception of Freedom that glowed in the heart of Epictetus; but in a bereavement of civil life which they could not have conceived possible, he gave their aspirations their only possible form. When the City perished, the deep and vivid yearnings it had nourished could not at once develop into the desire for national freedom. Constitutional government and uncorrupt representation would have seemed to those heroes a very poor exchange for what they had lost. The idea of Freedom found a deeper soil; it turned from the world without, where all was wintry and full of decay, to that inner life which seemed in comparison to burgeon with the promise of Spring.

The failure  
of the new  
ideal.

How, then, it may be asked, can we speak of this as an age of general servility? What more can protect an age from servility than that the idea of Freedom should enter the realm of the Invisible, that man should learn to recognise his true Freedom? If this was the commonplace of the age—if we find it on the page of rhetoricians no less than on that of men who set it forth in their lives—how could it be that the moral life of man, as far as it is associated with manly aim, seems then to have touched its nadir? We have given the answer to this question, but we must often repeat it. Men in this age were mere units. They awoke to perceive two great ideas—the sacredness of Personality, and the oneness of the race. But between these two ideas there was no combining element. The sense of human brotherhood knew no concentration; nowhere throughout the world of human relation could it find a focus. Earnest thinkers were never tired of speaking of man as a part of the universe; it was one of their stock themes, that as in the great ages of antiquity each one had felt himself the member of a State, so now he was to feel himself a part of that great whole, in which was included not only all human

society, but all the system of things which we know by the name of Nature. He was to transfer his loyalty from Athens or Rome to the Order of Nature, and to find exercise for all the sentiments formerly known as patriotism, in the fact of membership in a great system including the whole human world. They were even fond of illustrating this idea by the comparison with a living organism which St. Paul has made so familiar to Christendom; the criminal, they felt, was the schismatic; his condition comparable to that of the hand or foot which said to the rest of the body, "I have no need of thee." Nevertheless it is true that they were the strongest opponents of this idea, so far as it is a vital, practical reality. They spoke much of man's relation to the universe, they returned again and again to his position of membership in a society of Gods and men, but they made this a mere phrase, because they recognised no other membership but this. What we owe equally to all mankind we shall be slow to recognise as the claim of any one to whom we do not give it gladly. A Marcus Aurelius or an Epictetus will no doubt be ready to give every human being the rights of a brother; the average man will rather let the rights of a brother sink to the admitted claims of every human being, and act only from selfishness or preference. A human brotherhood, composed of mere individuals, is a rope of sand.

"We must leave the sins of other people alone," says Marcus Aurelius. The ruler who accepted that axiom must have been in some respects a worse ruler than Nero. Its influence is shown in the fact that he who said it was the father of Commodus. He entertained the noblest ideal of individual morality which ever animated the occupant of a throne, and he bequeathed that throne to a monster. When we see how often indignation is futile, when we realise the narrow limits within which man can judge his fellow, we are often tempted to believe with the Roman Stoics that Duty should never be recognised except in

The loss of all sense of membership one with another.

the sphere which each man encloses when he says "I." The Age of Death is a forcible refutation of that belief. If any one think that it is enough for each individual himself to refrain from wrong actions, himself to press forward to every noble aim, rigidly excluding from his endeavours any judgment of others, no period of history could be presented to him more full of instruction than the first few centuries of our era. He will see in the teaching of Marcus Aurelius and Epictetus, and even in some parts of Seneca, a standard of goodness not surpassed in some directions by any moral teaching, which was yet sterile for any result of which History can take account. The philosophers of this age taught and sincerely believed a large part of all that the teaching of Christ sets before man, a much larger part than can be claimed as the practical exhibition of Christianity at any stage of its development; and the result of their teaching was to make sycophants and cowards. Theirs was a mutilated ideal; not incomplete only in the sense that an ideal is the product of fallible human aspirations and on every side capable of expansion, but in the sense that on one side it has cut itself off from expansion. It considered man out of his natural condition, man as he is cut off from the bonds of human society, detached from all ties of family and country, isolated as in some spiritual Juan Fernandez. It regarded as a whole that being who is essentially part of a larger whole; and thus omitted from its content his most important relations, and the most organic necessities of his being.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE HUMAN TRINITY

THAT age which closes the history of the old world we have called the Age of Death; the title seems justified by the exhibition of its strongest interests and its habitual tendencies. But the death of one phase of life was the birth of another. The Roman Empire, indeed, may be called rather the beginning of modern than the end of ancient history. It presents a framework and plan for that ideal Unity to which the civilisation of the modern world seems continually to aspire; it shows us the nations of Europe bound in a corporate union which they have never since possessed, but towards which their subsequent history may be regarded as a constantly baffled attempt at return. We understand the Middle Ages best when we keep as a clue to their history the yearning in the mind of Dante after a corporate union of which the Pope should be the heart, and the Emperor the head. He felt the "Holy Roman Empire"<sup>1</sup> a sacred ideal; he, the truest son of Italy, wrote his treatise on Monarchy to celebrate the arrival of a German Emperor in Italy. The book was "an epitaph instead of a prophecy," but an epitaph which implied a legacy; the aspirations which it embodied prefigure a large part of the struggles of modern Europe, perhaps even of the struggles of the future. That Holy Roman Empire, which was neither Holy, nor Roman, nor an Empire, and yet perished only yesterday, was the representative of a great

Origin of  
the Holy  
Roman  
Empire.

<sup>1</sup> The little volume with this title by Mr. Bryce seems to me to embody the kernel of mediæval history.



idea; we may say of it, as Cicero of Cato, "the influence of the dead was undying." It is an influence traceable even in the work of a thinker whom his followers regard as the typical representative of modern thought. Comte, too, dreams of a Holy Empire, and sees in the future some reflex of that national union of which Roman law was the bond and expression. The Italian and the Frenchman, wide as the poles asunder, both believed that a common civilisation implies a common faith; they trusted that Europe shall at last find its soul.

Influence  
of this idea  
on non-  
political  
thought.

The aspiration of Dante and of Comte was in some sense the possession of those whose moral life we have been endeavouring to follow. The Roman Stoics and their contemporaries inhabited a united Europe, they lived under a single law, and in this new expansion and unquestioned dominion they felt a new meaning given to all law. The world had never before been a unity. The struggles of cities fill the record of the ancient world, the struggles of nations fill the record of the modern world; between them intervenes a time in which the scene of previous and subsequent conflicts was filled by one vast political organism, confronting all opposition as mere revolt. Hence all endeavour in the realm of thought took this ideal of Unity as its goal. As one dominion bound the vast world centering in Rome, so one aim was predominant in speculation; to harmonise all existent varieties of thought, to find something to accept in all. As Greece, Africa, the East, had each become a province of the Roman Empire, so Hellenic, Alexandrian, Oriental speculation must each become a part of the true faith. Everything that had ever been declared with earnestness must in some sense be true.

It awakens  
attention  
to the  
lesson of  
language.

This new sense of the oneness of truth beneath the variety of opinions must have been quickened by the mere fact that cultivation came at the time of which we speak to include a knowledge of more languages than one. When we compare any modern thinker with Plato, we perceive

that the most profound philosopher of antiquity, or rather of any time, is in some respects at a disadvantage in comparison with an ordinary person who knows that his own language is but one of many actual forms of speech. Plato could not shake off the belief that to understand a word is to discover the nature of a thing. The mistake, impossible for any modern, was hardly possible for a subject of the Roman Empire; acquaintance with even two languages sufficiently confutes the error that language is a photograph of existence. The Roman could not but know that Latin was language just in the same sense that Greek was. He must sometimes have suspected (as Plato never did) that language is an imperfect vehicle of thought, and that incomplete, or even misleading expression need not be erroneous statement. To study the illogical associations and misleading suggestions embodied in the history of words is to discover that a portion of the search for truth consists in disentangling what a speaker means from what he is obliged to say. When Antony, anxious to propitiate Cicero, throws the blame of the coolness between them on his own *ζηλοτυπία*,<sup>1</sup> each must have been struck by the fact that there was a feeling as common as *jealousy*, for which the Latin tongue provided no name. The discovery marks a long stage of moral progress. It is a far greater advance on the Greek state of mind—to know that there are two languages than it is on the Roman state of mind to know that there are many. Of course the Greek had always known that the barbarians could make themselves mutually intelligible; but it was impossible for him ever really to believe that any other language stood in the same relation to thought as his own did. Nor was Greek the only language which appeared to its speakers language in a special sense; the claim of Hebrew to that

<sup>1</sup> See the letter enclosed in *Epist. ad Att.*, x. 8. Cicero's recourse to scraps of Greek must have been a continual reminder of this new idea to himself and his correspondents.

position has lasted far longer. We cannot read many chapters of the Old Testament without perceiving that the idea of the mystic significance of names permeates the whole atmosphere of Hebrew thought. All those for whom there was one language *par excellence*, others being regarded merely as barbaric dialects, of necessity regarded a name as an infallible index to a portion of reality, and when this barrier against a true understanding of the function of language was removed a new view was obtained of the nature of thought. The discovery that different expressions might point to a single meaning could hardly fail to awaken a suspicion that different meanings might point to a single truth.

The polar  
opposites  
of the  
moral  
world.

The great antithesis of human thought takes many forms. We have recognised it at the starting-point of history as that between the faiths of India and Persia; we might perhaps describe it at the present day as that between Science and Religion. In the period to which we now return—the first two centuries of our era—we may discover it in the antagonism between Hellenism and Hebraism. The Greek, with his harmony of opposites, his swift inversion of sympathy, his delight in varied thought, his elastic expansiveness of comprehension, had declared in brilliant and enduring poetry and art that man is various, that all vivid feeling is legitimate, all strong impulse healthful gymnastic. And seeing everywhere the human even when he sought the Divine, he enthroned Humanity in Heaven, and found there, not the pure white ray, but the rainbow into which that ray was refracted by his prismatic genius. The very opposite of all this describes the faith of the Jew. In his abhorrence of all worship of the Visible, his profound loyalty to the Unseen, he never ceased to emphasise his conviction that God is one, and that the true Man is the son of God. When we have entered into the depth of Hebrew thought, have felt its thrill of awe at the ineffable Name

gested by all creation, and least inadequately associated with that declaration, "I am"; and then, returning from that plunge into an abyss, have soared to a height from which we may overlook the wide, varied extent of Hellenic life and thought, we seem to have left no region of human interest unvisited. On the one hand, the history of Man is comprised in his relation to God. The creature and the Creator stand face to face. On the other is sympathy with all human impulse, and, towards the super-human, a bright, fearless irreverence. Fresh from Hebrew awe of God, and Hellenic interest in Man—from the Hebrew sense of Righteousness and Iniquity, the Hellenic sympathy with varied impulse and elasticity of moral view—we have touched the extremes of all moral life, and seem to have confronted the blankest contradiction which can set human thoughts on paths of unvarying divergence. Even after these polar opposites have been combined in a plan of European education for some sixty generations, the overgrowth of venerable memories does not entirely conceal the heterogeneity of the compound edifice which it drapes. The ideals are opposite, even when the association is closest. And at their first contact the two races were divided as much by their likeness as by their unlikeness. Their common claim to a typical position with regard to humanity brought out their antagonism; Hellenism was a religion almost as much as Hebraism. Pericles had declared,<sup>1</sup> as distinctly as the author of the eighty-seventh Psalm, that his native city was a home of the soul; the citizenship of Athens as of Jerusalem was open ideally to the élite spirits of the human race. We, looking back across two millenniums of civilisation into whose warp and woof both claims have been woven, can see that both were justified, but it needed some such

Συνελήθησαν οι Αδελφοί, με την  
 11.4.1951 (Τρίτη) 1951  
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καὶ Ἰσραὴλ πατέρα αὐτοῦ· (Thucyd.  
2. 12.) Zion his mother, and of it is

experience before assumptions so absolute and so vehemently opposed could be reconciled.

Their common centre of gravity.

But an impartial inexorable dominion over these antagonists brought them into relation with each other. The monotonous receptivity of Rome, attentive, unsympathising, yet in a certain sense respectful, full of recognition for all that could make out for itself the claim of tradition, ready to give space and legitimacy to everything that would own Roman authority in the political sphere, supplied all opposites with a plan of mediation. That impartial wide-reaching Law came in as the harmonising element, recognised as the power "through which we enjoy very great quietness,"<sup>1</sup> felt as a refuge even from the tyranny of those who administered it, and an ideal protector even from the enormities that were perpetrated in its name. The place of Rome, at that stage of the world, would be more intelligible to modern Christendom if it were less familiar. Who could peruse for the first time those four accounts of the great tragedy of which the meaning is blunted, for the ears of modern Europe, by excessive familiarity, without discerning that the victory of fanaticism was the defeat of Rome? If Pilate had been true to the vocation of the Roman governor he would not have delivered an unconvinced prisoner into the hands of an angry mob. On hearing that strange excuse for his omission, "He that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin," the judge sought to release his captive. He felt that the Roman governor was called on to teach the peoples committed to his charge the common element of Law. It was no part of his commission to revise the law of the Jew, but where appeal was made to the law of the Roman, there he was called on to give that judgment which was applicable to humanity. He was to take cognisance of all that was peculiar in Law, but he was never to leave hold of what was universal. When the cry of the rabble—"If thou

<sup>1</sup> Acts xxiv. 2 (Tertullus to Felix).



let this man go thou art not Cæsar's friend"—overcame the impartiality of the judge, an example was set up for all time of that obliteration of the justice of Rome by the weakness or vice of Romans, which doubtless was the most familiar aspect of its legal system to its subjects; but in that concession the Roman law had no part—it was defied, not distorted. We see, in the speculations of Paul, how deep into the heart of the sons of Israel sank that new conception of Law as something universal, which it was the mission of Roman law to bring home to the heart of the nations. "The law was our pedagogue to bring us to Christ," is no more than a statement of a single aspect of that character in Law which Roman law most perfectly realised and embodied. It was the Mediator of the Nations.

When the two races, each of which claimed to be the ideal representative of humanity, confronted each other in a rivalry of spiritual claim under the tremendous pressure supplied by the rule of Rome, the first effect of their contact was increased antagonism. The worship of the Formless, the Unseen, presented itself to the classic mind as vague Pantheism, or degrading superstition. The Jews, says a Greek historian,<sup>1</sup> believed that God was merely "what we call Heaven and the universe and the nature of things." The Roman satirist<sup>2</sup> declares that they "pray to the clouds and the power of Heaven." The Roman historian<sup>3</sup> describes them as "given over to superstition, but disinclined to religion." They who saw God everywhere, seemed to the Roman to see Him nowhere. They did see Him nowhere in the sense that He was there and not here. The Roman General in the Holy of Holies, where he found no image, and where he must have deemed himself confronted with a vacuum as much of faith as of imagination, is a type of the

The r profound antagonism.

<sup>1</sup> Strabo, xvi. 2, 35

<sup>2</sup> "Nil præter nubes, et cœli nomen adorant."—Juvénal, xiv. 97.

<sup>3</sup> "Gens superstitioni obnoxia, religionibus adversa."—Tacitus, *Hist.* v. 13. Cf. also Pliny, *Hist. Nat.*, xiii. 9.

mind formed on Greek culture, in presence of a profound faith rooted in a depth to which he could not penetrate; as, in like manner, the Jewish Apostle, at the centre of Greek art, indignant at shapes of beauty which he deemed objects of idolatry, is a type of the mind formed by Hebrew faith in presence of that Greek worship of the beautiful which he could not comprehend. We should think of Paul at Athens and Pompey at Jerusalem,<sup>1</sup> as showing forth respectively the illusions which beset the worshipper of the Unseen and the lover of the Beautiful when they attempt to judge each other. Paul thought that race to be superstitious who probably had the least superstition of any men then on the face of the earth. Pompey, or at all events those who took their impressions through the medium of his conquest, thought that race to be irreligious whose very existence was grounded on the acknowledgment of the One Invisible Ruler. Athens superstitious and Jerusalem irreligious! The fact that such things were said is a warning for the critics of every age.

Its intensity a preparation for recognising the underlying Unity.

But the time had come when the thinker of each race was to feel that its own lesson was incomplete when standing alone. The discernment that all the diversities which separate human beings are less important than that underlying unity which forms their bond, came home to the men of that time as a religious truth. Mahomet did not believe more emphatically that God was one than did the earnest spirits of the first two centuries of our era that Man was one. Taught by the vanishing of distinctions which had seemed to their fathers profound and vital, by the inclusion of their whole world within the circuit of a common law,

<sup>1</sup> Pompey did in fact order the sanctuary to be purified and the sacrifices continued, but respect for the religion of the conquered was a part of Roman policy, and we may take the impression given in these citations as including that which he was the means of bringing to Rome. For the contempt and hatred with which the Jews were regarded by the Romans, see Cicero, *Pro Flacco*, 28, and Tacitus, *Hist.* v. 4. "Profana omnia quæ apud nos sacra: rursum concessa apud illos quæ nobis incesta." a mere calumny, vividly expressing the detestation which gave it birth.

perhaps even by the madness and crime of those individuals whom their position of Imperial rulers seemed to lift above that law, they recognised that what was common to the slave and the emperor was more important than what was special for each. It is hardly possible for us who see this as a truism to realise what it was to those who hailed it as a great moral discovery. The preciousness of man as man was felt more strongly in this earliest age of the modern world than it was felt again before the eighteenth century. It was opposed by the spirit of chivalry, by mediæval religion, and then again by the spirit of the Renaissance; each of these laid stress on something exceptional; that recognition of the common as the uniting element was a prophecy of all that is most advanced in modern democracy. Under this new light the lesson both of the Greek and of the Jew took a new meaning. The Greek had shown forth the exceptional elements of human life—its beauty, its genius, its most penetrating discernment. All that was most precious in merely human thought was enshrined in Greek language; all that was most ideal in the representation of human beauty was fashioned by Greek hands. The Jew had received and acted on the conviction that to him was entrusted the duty of proclaiming all that is deepest in Divine Truth. The work of Phidias, of Homer, of Sophocles, had become a tribute to the dignity of Man; the message of Moses, of David, of Isaiah, had become an appeal to the ears of every-day men. As the Greek was beginning to perceive that beneath the variety of human life lay a deeper Unity, so the Jew began to feel that within the Unity of the Divine life lay a richer variety, and that corresponding to this might be a Divine message to other races than his own. Each race had embodied a certain ideal type towards which all that called itself Man was supposed to be aspiring, but between each and the outer world a formidable barrier had existed which no aspirations could overleap and few endeavours pierce. Some protest against it may be found in the deeper

spirits on both sides. Plato<sup>1</sup> had felt the imperfect logical character of the division of Greeks and Barbarians; it was, he said, as if cranes should divide the whole animal world into cranes and not-cranes; but morally he felt its influence, and his countrymen probably never saw any flaw in it. Isaiah, on the other hand, had called Egypt God's people, and Assyria the work of His hands, but we feel in every page of St. Paul's epistles the novelty of his doctrine that in Christ there is neither Jew nor Gentile. If we bring home to our imagination the revolutionary character, on both sides, of this new belief in the unity of man, we shall be ready to give it a large place in forming and modifying the new belief in the Unity of God.

Three races  
in one  
humanity.

We may at first be inclined to regard it as a mere coincidence that the trinity of earth was so soon to be mirrored in the 'Trinity of Heaven. Certainly we cannot correlate the two exactly, and we must also admit that, since the collision of opposites and the presence of a Mediator is a universal rhythm of human development, the earthly trinity is independent of any particular historic phase. But in no phase has it been expressed so pregnantly as when Jerusalem and Athens collided in the presence of Rome—when the race which declared the Divine Unity collided with the race that declared the human variety, in the presence of the race whose call was to the Mediatorship of all races. And thus Humanity, one as it had never been before, three-in-one as it has never been before or since, gave to this earthly trinity a Divine expression also. It came to a passionate sense of the truth that was behind it and the truth that was in front—the truth in both Polytheism and Monotheism. The idea of a Trinity in heaven is far older than the Athanasian Creed, and is indeed the natural formula for the belief that God is One as the family is one—that eternal Love must needs have an eternal object. But the idea was not brought home to the world until the two races who have respectively

<sup>1</sup> *Politicus*, 263.

done most for its spiritual and intellectual development met under the rule of the race which has done most for its government—until one civilisation depended on three elements—Judæa, Greece, and Rome.

The lesson appointed for the peoples enclosed in the iron framework of the Roman Empire may be described on the one side, as the transformation of the part into the whole; on the other, as the recognition of the seeming whole as a part. The citizen of antiquity had been a fragment of the State. The subject of Imperial Rome, on the other hand, was cut off from any share in political life, yet claimed the protection of law, and made, in consequence, the discovery that he was himself a unity in a sense in which nothing else was a unity. But the lesson was quite as true in an inverted form; with the extinction of the city state arose the idea, inconceivable to the great minds of antiquity, of the State as a fragment of humanity. The only approach to such an idea, we have seen, was a certain faint conception of what we should call nationality among the Hellenic States, and how faint it became the moment any strain was put upon it will be made clear to any one who will read the narrative of the war which divided these states. Perhaps the dream of Plato even more than the narrative of Thucydides exhibits the narrow limits of Greek moral attention. Political life, we know, is the realm of compromise—much has there to be accepted and deplored; but when a great thinker incorporates in his imaginative type of government all that he holds to be desirable, we should expect that the relation to other states, now often regarded as almost the sole sphere of political morality, would be transfigured with large and aspiring suggestions. When we turn to the ideal Republic we discover that the extreme expansion in this direction is a hasty and merely negative set of precautions in favour not of human but of Hellenic claim. His Republic is to be a type of all that is excellent in government, but is not to

Rome the  
Mediator.



concern itself with the welfare of non-Hellenic races at all, and only with that of other Greek cities so far as to abstain from the worst barbarities in warfare with them. Their spiritual interests are nothing to him. His disapproval of poetry is absolute; he extracts a number of passages in Homer much more familiar, probably, than any quotation from Shakespeare is among us, and holds them up to reprobation, and then concludes that these noxious heretics, the dramatic poets, are to be—condemned to death? fined and admonished? taught the error of their ways? or even banished beyond the limits of the Hellenic world? Nothing of the kind; they are to be treated with the greatest reverence,<sup>1</sup> receive marks of popular favour, and then begged to go away to some other (of course Greek) city. They may teach their “immoral fictions” where they like, so it be not in the Republic of Plato. No fact could better illustrate the narrow selectiveness of Greek sympathies than such a fancy, coming from the best and wisest of Greeks.

No personal representative of Roman influence.

From a group of cities, each of which would in England be a small provincial town, to the vast Empire which included the whole of non-Hellenic Europe, the change is not one only of degree; so great a change of scale can rarely fail to be more than one of degree. It was a change of tendency. The old law of Athenian citizenship necessarily tended towards contraction; that which was valid in the middle of the fifth century before Christ would have disfranchised Themistocles.<sup>2</sup> The law of Imperial Rome was of necessity expansive. It had to find room for some principles of graduated dealing with subject races; its doors began to open inwards. Not because Rome was humane or just, but because she was Imperial. The significance of the single creation of Rome—its law—was brought out by the very barrenness and poverty of the Roman character. Of itself Roman feeling merely echoed and emphasised with

<sup>1</sup> *Republic*, 398.

<sup>2</sup> As having a Thracian mother. See Plutarch's *Life of Themistocles*.

its own hardness the exclusiveness of Greece. There was no touch of originality in the Roman; his work was to organise, to arrange, to combine—never to create. The Roman poet<sup>1</sup> sang no heroic deeds, warmed into life no dim legend, created no character, bade no memory glow with the brilliancy of dramatic power. His theme was the Nature of Things; his genius was devoted to the subject least stimulating to genius of any that has ever been set to the music of noble verse. Yet the result is imperishable, because here the positive genius of Rome found its true work; the lawgiver of the nations interprets the law of the universe. No matter that its interpretation is childish if we look at it in the light of full scientific development; its errors are only in detail, the spirit of law is there, and with it the spirit of Rome. The deeper feeling of the ancient world towards Law outside of Palestine is expressed in the line of Sophocles:<sup>2</sup>—

“None knoweth the fountain of Eternal Law.”

It is in accordance with this strong impersonal tendency that when we would single out from the Roman world a typical figure as expressive of the Roman influence on its noblest side, we are unable to find one. The great jurists of the third century of our era do indeed deserve commemoration with the noblest men of any age; the ranks of martyrdom record no worthier name than that of Papinian, withstanding the murderous rage of Caracalla, and finding it “easier to commit than to excuse a fratricide.”<sup>3</sup> He who died rather than compose an apology for the world’s tyrant exhibits the influence of Roman law on its loftiest and purest side, and we are not surprised to find a claim made by modern Christians for some influence on such men from Christianity, a hypothesis which must, we fear, be dismissed as highly improbable. But we cannot

<sup>1</sup> Lucretius; see above, p. 262.

<sup>2</sup> *Antigone*, 456-457.

<sup>3</sup> Gibbon, ch. 6.

focus the influence of Roman law upon the world in any striking individuality; this great bequest remains as an embodiment of the vocation of Rome, obscured by the crimes of Romans rather than illustrated by their virtues. It seems to grow in despite of them, like some influence of nature. It lacks an individual representative.

Philo, the  
Alexan-  
drian Jew.

Far otherwise is it with the other two elements of the new Orthodoxy; here we have no difficulty in finding men who embody principles. The typical representative of the new sense of a Unity underlying all difference, on its Divine side, must of course be sought in the Jewish race. We cannot, as at first we are inclined to do, accept St. Paul as such a representative; he represents too much besides. It is to one of his contemporaries that we must look for an embodiment of Hebraism in face of Hellenism—to the Jew Philo. On the soil of Alexandria the son of Israel could perpetuate the exclusiveness neither of his own race nor that of the race by whose culture his mind had been formed. Escaping from the narrow horizon of both, he saw their several histories as each a chapter in the history of humanity, while he found the clue to all the volume in that of his own race. He felt, as only the select few of his countrymen had ever felt before, that Israel had a message to the human race. He saw all that had separated his countrymen from the Gentiles as a promise of their beneficent union with the Gentiles. An intimate knowledge of all that is most precious in Gentile lore prepared him to discover its readiness to enrich and to be enriched by a yet higher lore; to feel that its most characteristic lessons were incomplete until they were combined with the doctrine of which they might on a narrow view appear almost the denial, and that they first found their deepest meaning when they met their antithetic belief. He shows us how close may be the relation of convictions separated by the fiercest intellectual opposition, and how men who seem to meet in blank antagonism,

may but illustrate, complete, and expand each other's thought.

Deep is the gratitude owing to the teacher of such a lesson, even when we have to disentangle it from much that dilutes its value. It must be conceded that on the page of Philo we find prefigured the theological confusion which has always obscured the meaning of inspiration in the eyes of mankind. He saw that Greek and Hebrew wisdom were ready to combine, but he blurred that truth by insisting that a harmony was a unison.<sup>1</sup> The Old Testament, he urges continually, does not mean what it says; its actual meaning is a kernel within a husk, which many have taken for the fruit, and thus both fed on the husks and also trampled under foot the precious grain. At Alexandria probably he knew most of the last, and is always trying to prepare his readers to bear Greek raillery. It is very easy, he tells those Greeks who sharpened their wits on the Septuagint, to make merry with the sacred writings, if we regard them as a narrative of events. But the wise man does not regard Hebrew history as a record of anything that has happened. The history which merely informs a careless reader that the serpent tempted Eve, and that she tempted Adam, teaches the seeker after truth that Pleasure,<sup>2</sup> the tempter, represented by the serpent, appeals first to sense, and then through sense achieves its conquest over mind. In narrating the destruction of the old world by a flood, when the waters that fell from above met the waters that rose from below,<sup>3</sup> it really sets forth the awful calamity of permission to sin, of that oneness of impulse from which the distraction of wrong is removed and the whole nature is turned to evil, when the moral order

The strength of symbolism

<sup>1</sup> See, e.g. *Quis Rerum Divinarum Hæres*, Mangey, vol. iv. 92-94, where he seems to suppose that the harmony of opposites taught by Heraclitus was plagiarised from the Pentateuch. This citation, and those which follow, are, with the exception of that on p. 342, which it does not include, from the Erlangen edition of Mangey's *Philo* (Pfeiffer), in five vols., 1785-92.

<sup>2</sup> *De Mundi Opificio*, i. 112-114. Cf. *Liber ii. Legis Allegoriarum*, *passim*, same vol.

<sup>3</sup> *De Confusione Linguarum*, iii. 324.

is, as it were, submerged beneath instincts from which God has withdrawn His protest; and even from the Heavens above the destroying influence pours down to meet the rising tide below. Surely a profound lesson, even if it be not one for which, to the modern reader, the Flood seems a suitable parable, or one which was likely to be in the mind of its narrator.

and its  
weakness.

It is not only in the vast events of History that this mystic wisdom is discernible; we can learn from the minutest details, as from the grandest outlines of the sacred record, some principle of the Divine teaching of humanity. When we read in the account of the mysterious sacrifice of Abraham,<sup>1</sup> "The birds he did not divide," we may learn, if we truly receive what is there conveyed to us, the great lesson of unity of mind, the bird being an emblem of that spiritual principle in every man which makes him a unity. The Hebrew writings take the form of narrative, because that is the only form in which the deepest truths can be presented to man; but those truths are not to be conceived of under the time-relations of history; they are the expressions, necessarily imperfect, and to the superficial reader misleading, of that which is eternal. It is not that these things might not have happened—Philo takes so very little interest in that question that it is not always easy to say which way he answered it—but that which happened is not their meaning for us.<sup>2</sup> We have to seek out that meaning as ore in a mine, not take it ready made as coins from the mint. We have, in a certain sense, to be fellow-workers with the writer; we hardly need less mental activity to decipher, than he to compose, his narrative. It is true only to those who can thus decipher it.

It is always  
the foe of  
Science.

Philo is here the ancestor of an important section of the

<sup>1</sup> *Quis Rerum Divinarum Hæres*, iv. 100, 102.

<sup>2</sup> Sometimes he must have regarded them as literally false. He says of the sacrifice of Isaac that the wise man is no child-slayer (*De Migratione Abrahami*, iii. 475).



Church lasting from its first existence to our own day, and embodying some of its most pregnant thought and purest aspiration. Yet none is more fundamentally hostile to the spirit of Science. When the seeker after Truth, asking "What happened at a particular time?" or "What was meant by a particular writer?" is answered, "This and this is the lesson we are meant to learn from the words you are striving to interpret," he feels that a serious investigation is transformed into a game of cross-questions. Nothing can be more unsatisfactory than a mode of exegesis which insists that a seeming narrative is an actual sermon; which forbids us to compare dates, when the history is elaborately chronological; which treats as impiety the analysis of numbers, when our text is full of statistics; which ignores a historic aim elaborately insisted on, and thrusts in a homiletic aim nowhere hinted at. This view of Inspiration puts a moral premium on an intellectual attitude which deliberately cultivates the ignorance of fact. Nevertheless we shall not understand history unless we are prepared to make a certain place in our intellectual sympathy for those who have cherished it. Their superstitious reverence for the letter of Scripture was the withering husk to a seed of truth—the belief that principles applicable to all history are applicable to one history in a special sense. As the seventh day was hallowed to the Lord in order that all days might be recognised as holy, so, we may surely agree with the Jew at Alexandria, was the elect race set apart as the ideal Son of God in order that all races might be recognised as actual sons of God. If we express his belief in terms comprehensible only by his successors we may say that when the inner meaning of the Jewish history is deciphered a "Rosetta stone" is set up for all the hieroglyphics of human history. In seeking for the symbolism of fact, Philo betrays, it must be confessed, a more than ordinary lack of the historic sense; he hurries on to the principle, before making sure of the event, and regards

carefulness concerning accuracy of fact as indifference to the truth which lies at the basis of facts. But this is an error of very different importance at different periods in the development of thought. In hurrying on to the symbolic meaning of a story before deciding whether it was accurate, Philo was not opposing any obvious principle, as he would have been in a generation familiar with historical investigation and with the accuracy that is bred of physical science. He was not defying, like his theological successors, the universally accepted tests of his intellectual world. In another respect also he may be favourably compared with them—he never set up a date, or a geographical boundary at which inspiration ceased; it was the condition of all direct influence from God to man at all times. He illustrates it quite simply from his own experience.<sup>1</sup> Man under this influence hears a voice which is not his own, and feels that his personality becomes in a special sense, what the very word *person* would seem to witness that it is always in some sense, a channel through which comes an utterance he accepts but does not originate. The subjective element of inspiration was in his view common to humanity. As history was the language of God, so the ear to hear it might be opened in every son of man.

Philo brings the Roman idea of Law into connection with the Hebrew idea of the Lawgiver.

The ear to hear it belongs to every race, but the voice to utter it, Philo felt, belongs to one which was in a special sense typical of humanity. The ideal Israel, who is also the ideal Man, is in truth an embodiment and incarnation of Divine Law, the Law set forth in action and endurance. "God our Saviour extends His all-healing medicine to His suppliants through the just man."<sup>2</sup> Man thus rises, by a perfect harmony with God's will, into a position above

<sup>1</sup> *De Migratione Abrahami*, Mangey, iii. 426.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* iii. 468. The wise take God for their teacher; the less perfect take the wise man (*Quis Rerum Divinarum Hæres*, *Ibid.* iv. 10.

humanity. "Abraham went as the Lord commanded him,"<sup>1</sup> he says, "means the same thing as when it is said by philosophers, to follow Nature. . . . The words of God are the actions of the wise man," and the Word of God is the Law of Nature. Abraham was the ideal Stoic. Thus the Jewish sense of a Mediator melts into the Roman sense of Law. It is a personal conception on this side of the barrier, on that an impersonal; but in a true reception of either we have a preparation for the other—none at any rate could be better prepared for a true apprehension of the meaning of all law than a son of Israel. The deep and passionate devotion of the Jews to the oppressive system of precepts which they had inherited from the past perplexed even the Romans. A people who allowed their enemy to prepare on the Sabbath the ruin of their city,<sup>2</sup> unhindered by them, rather than violate the command which only on the narrowest literalism could seem to prohibit their defence of their native land, had learned at least what it was to escape from the "unchartered freedom" of individual desire into the repose of obedience. In this strange fanaticism for an oppressive and elaborate code they learned the stability, the strength, the oneness that is given to a people who resolutely keep a law. Even if it be unreasonable and fantastic, it still impresses on the Many the unity of a single ideal; and the Jew who watched in passivity the approaches of the hated invader rather than clutch on the Sabbath the sword after which his hands must always have yearned, rendered

<sup>1</sup> *De Migratione Abrahami*, *Ibid.* iii. 470.

<sup>2</sup> As was said to happen under Ptolemy Soter, 320 B.C.; and Josephus cites the reproach of the historian Agatharchides, that "they submitted to be under a hard master by reason of their unreasonable superstition" (Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, xii. i. 1). There is no doubt as to their abstinence from action during the siege under Pompey, when they allowed the Roman engineers to carry on their siege works unmolested on the Sabbath (*ibid.* xiv. iv. 3); and Dio Cassius (xxxvii. 16) says that without this abstinence the Temple would never have been taken. A century earlier, at the outbreak of the Maccabean revolt, they let themselves be slaughtered like sheep rather than draw the sword on the sacred day. See also Josephus, *contra Apion*, ii. 33. The whole book is an important testimony to the influence of the Mosaic legislation.

a magnificent tribute to the irresistible attraction of a formal code which was but the casket and framework of Duty. Jewish fanaticism impressed the Roman with mere contempt; and the feeling was mutual, except so far as on the other side it was diluted with fear. Nevertheless the fanaticism of the Jew was a preparation for that citizenship of Rome, against which it was also, in its external aspect, the strongest barrier. He had nothing to remove from the Roman conceptions of Law before he could accept them, only something to add—the idea, which dominated his whole life, of a Divine Lawgiver. For him Divine Will lay at the root of all being; it was a Divine command which had called into existence all that meets eye and ear and touch, and every change in their order must be regulated, therefore, by a Divine decision.

Creation a  
new idea.

Deeply penetrating, widely reaching, was the influence that poured upon the world through the Hebrew belief in Creation. Human Will takes a new meaning when men believe that all they see and touch takes its origin in the decision of a Divine mind. Man is for ever being made in the image of God, and the generation which regards the Divine Being rather as a spectator than as the author of the Universe, cannot regard it as the business of man to control and shape the world of humanity. Such belief in a Creator as we find in the earlier world wholly lacked this influence. The Will of God is a conception wanting to classic antiquity. There was Will enough in the superhuman beings who hovered above the world of mortal effort with benign or hostile influence, but it was not the source of Destiny, only an eddy on its stream; it brought the mind into no contact with Origin. The distinctness of the new ideal is visible to us on the page of Philo. "Those who describe the world as being uncreated," he says, "cut off unawares the very idea of providence, and dry up the sources of piety." How could any one, we ask, do this unawares? Only in so far as

realising their bearing on actual life. The conception of a Divine Creator gave the active powers of humanity a new glory, and also a new responsibility. The shadow of scorn passed from industry; the toil of the slave gained a Divine type. The shadow had never reached the soil of Judæa. "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work," said a Jew contemporary with Philo, and the words gather up the life of Israel. That scorn for toil which is bred of slavery never could utterly pervert a son of Israel. The corrupt Roman might scoff at his reverence for the Sabbath as a varnish of superstition over sloth,<sup>1</sup> but the truth was, that to revere the Sabbath was to revere labour. No one can find rest who avoids toil. "Six days shalt thou labour, and do all that thou hast to do," is a part of the command that bade the Jew do no manner of work on the seventh day. If observance of that law was exaggerated into superstition when the Jew watched, in his Sabbatic repose, the advance of the Roman siege works rather than draw his sword on the day of rest, what stored-up force of patience and will is expressed in that surrender! And who can doubt that the energy for toil as much as for combat was reinforced by that rhythmic abstinence? Philo only translated the law of the Sabbath into the language of ethics when he declared that "labour was the root of every other excellence,"<sup>2</sup> "a mediator between the soul and every other virtue, as light between the eye and colour." Here, evidently, he feels the suggestion of difficulty and effort which we convey in the very word virtue. Labour, he says, here and elsewhere (carrying out the same idea into a fanciful metaphor), is the "food of goodness"; it would dwindle and shrink without this daily nourishment. He here brings the wisdom of the Jew into a form in which it could be intelligible to the Greek. It never would be acceptable to the Greek.

<sup>1</sup> Juvenal, xiv. 105.

<sup>2</sup> *De Sac. Abelis et Caini*, Mangey, iii. 84-88, see also *De Posteritate Caini*, *Ibid* ii. 336. Philo's feeling for the Sabbath is vividly expressed in the treatise *De Mundi Opificio*.



The city life, so dear to his heart, was inextricably entangled with slavery, and slavery made the command, "Six days shalt thou labour," unnecessary and hateful. But a race which looked around on the earth and sky, and felt at every throb of joyous life that God was the maker of man, could never put hand to the plough or spade without some dim sense of partnership in the Divine work. Labour was Divine, and therefore it was, in the deepest sense of the word, truly human.

Its moral  
influence.

It is just because Man and God, in the Jewish conception, stand opposite to each other as Creature and Creator (instead of being both equally creators in one sense and both equally creatures in another) that the Jew felt himself near God in a sense the Greek never could share. The confidence that "Thou wilt have a desire to the work of Thine own hands" breathes through every line of the Jewish Scriptures, and its reflection on the page of Philo is much stronger than any ray from Greek wisdom which reaches his broad mirror. "We have the uncreated, the eternal Father, who hears the silent, and sees the hidden,"<sup>1</sup> he makes Joseph say to his brethren when reassuring them after their father's death; and this sense of the Father can never, to the Jewish mind, be swallowed up in the idea of the King. God is more awful than the most awful earthly monarch, but no earthly monarch would permit the boldness of remonstrance which the Hebrew Scriptures give as the utterance of His trusted servant. No parts of the Old Testament seem to have laid more hold on Philo's imagination than those which record the appeals of Abraham and of Moses to a Divine Righteousness with which Divine appointment appeared inconsistent. "Shall not the Judge of all the world do right?" seems to gather up for him the fearless confidence which mingled with boundless awe of the Creator. Philo, the ambassador to Caligula, vividly realised the contrast

<sup>1</sup> *De Josepho*, xliii. (Leipsic ed.).

between that bond which united the Jew to his unseen Lord and that which kept a nation of slaves trembling at the foot of the tyrant.<sup>1</sup> The son of Israel was more akin to the unseen Unity than the Roman to the Emperor of Rome. Philo feels vividly that the earthly Lord was not in any sense the image of the heavenly Lord; that in the Fatherly dominion authority was less prominent than love.

All such types were inadequate; the relation between God and Man was one too deep, too intimate, to be fully expressed even by the bond between father and son; all that was most organic in human relation was but its shadow. The well-known words of Andromache to Hector seem to haunt Philo as its least inadequate expression. The wise man finds this world an exile, but he may say "Lord, Thou art to me fatherland, kindred, and paternal hearth."<sup>2</sup> And indeed the relation of sex lies very near all his views of the relation of God and man. The distinction of the passive and the active, suggested by the two halves of humanity, is ideally complete in the relation of humanity to That which is above it. Israel was the spouse of the Lord; the ideal Humanity needed the Divine for its counterpart, as a bride her bridegroom. And thus the religion of the Jew held in germ all that elevation of woman which is most characteristic of modern, and most unlike classic, thought. The race which realised the true oneness between God and man realised for the first time the true oneness between man and woman. Modern scholarship looks with scorn on the view which sees a hidden allegory in the little love-poem included in the Hebrew Scriptures; but this mystic interpretation is no more than a refraction, through the mists of an exclusive worship, of that deep sense of the infinite in human passion, which, though it be constantly the

The closest human relation best typifies the relation of Humanity to the Divine.

<sup>1</sup> ταῦτα γὰρ (i.e. the complaints of Moses, as Numb. xi. 11, Exod. v. 22, &c.) . . . εἶπεν ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ πρὸς τὸν πατέρα αὐτοῦ ἐν μέλει βασιλέων ἐπὶ αὐτῶν (Quia Herum Dixerunt Heres, Mangey, iv. 10).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. iv. 14.

rival of all sense of the Divine, is yet intimately akin to a sense of the antithesis of the Divine and the Human. The Song of Solomon may bear witness to its intelligent readers, far more distinctly than to those who put an unreal meaning into every word, that the feeling which prostrates man before God has a deep and hidden connection with that in which man and woman find, each in each, the completion and explanation of their being. The tenderest love known to human beings takes a fresh dimension when it is felt as an illustration and type of the faith in That which engulfs and overshadows them:—in every way transcending human vision and explaining it.

and brings  
in a new  
conception  
of virtue.

The human race, when it is thus regarded as the spouse of the Divine, acquires new duties and new attributes. . The fierce Hebrew was the first to recognise Humility as the characteristic human attitude; it was impossible for him ever to forget that Presence in face of which no other attitude seemed tolerable to him. "The meek shall inherit the earth" is (we often forget) a quotation from a psalm. . If Greek dread of arrogance, Greek reverence for proportion, has left us many expressions outwardly resembling that text, the resemblance is merely outward. Greek religion grew out of the self-assertion of Man; it knew nothing of the antithesis of Creator and Creature. God and Man to the Greek were not even contrasted as the perfect and imperfect, for Olympus repeats and exaggerates all the sins of earth. A God was merely an intensified, not a purified, Man. "The nothingness of the Creature" is an idea inconceivable to a Greek. Man was himself a Creator. All that most interested the Greek mind was created by man. The very name of poet, signifying creator, has passed into our language indicating that which we feel the immortal work of the most exalted human intellect; and while attention is concentrated on the poet and the artist, the contrast of Creator and Creature grows dim. Zeus was in some

sense a creature—he had his genealogy, his parentage; there had been a time when he was not. All the vicissitude that made a human being interesting applied to him; his loves, his hates, even his disasters and crimes were human, there was nothing in the contemplation of his greatness to humble mankind. “Dost thou delight in deceit, Father Zeus?”<sup>1</sup> is a daring, not an impious, exclamation on the lips of a worshipper of Zeus. “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” is not less bold an utterance on the lips of a Hebrew, but how different is the spirit! The boldness springs, on the one side, from the audacity of man; on the other, from trust in God.

Humility belongs to an ideal unknown to the classic world. We rarely peruse any reference to self from a great man of antiquity without being reminded of its absence as part of an ideal. As a personal characteristic it must be always rare, but it has in modern Europe modified the conventions of all intercourse and all expression. A modern Pericles<sup>2</sup> could not declare that his fellow-citizens ought to put unlimited trust in a statesman so patriotic and incorruptible as himself; a modern Cicero could not proclaim his own life too valuable to be risked in the enemy's camp.<sup>3</sup> The very word self has acquired associations unknown to antiquity; it is always spoken or heard with a sense of warning.

No more is needed, in order to satisfy the claim of duty, than to understand both the sense in which the *We* includes the *I*, and the sense in which it does not. On either side a door is open to temptation; the *We* has its dangers as well as the *I*—dangers which the City-State exhibited in their darkest hues. But of the dangers of the *I* it was not even

The new  
moral  
standard.

Selfishness  
a new  
idea.

<sup>1</sup> *Il.* xli. 169. Cf. also xxii. 15.

<sup>2</sup> See the speech of Pericles in the second year of the Peloponnesian war (Thucydides, ii. 60): *ἐμὸν τοιοῦτον ἀνδρὶ δορυλῆσθε, &c.*

<sup>3</sup> See Cicero, *Philippics*, xii. 8, which reads almost as a translation of the above: “is enim sum qui vigilis, curis,” &c. There was a question of sending him on an embassy to Antony.

aware: Selfishness proper is a defect unrecognised by Greek moral thought. When Thucydides chronicles the baseness of some Lacedemonians who made terms with the Athenian general at the expense of their allies and their own country's reputation, he calls them "Seekers of their own."<sup>1</sup> No single word gathered up such a temper of mind for the Greek. "An excessive love of self is an enemy to truth,"<sup>2</sup> says Plato; but so, to the Greek mind, was an excessive love of anything. Self-love would be to the Hellenic imagination a mere accompaniment of consciousness. "Know thyself" is the watchword of Hellenic wisdom, as "Deny thyself" is of Hebrew faith; the goal of thought for the Greek was for the Jew a point of departure. All that affiliates itself with Greek teaching enforces reverence for the Self; only the Jew discerned the peril that lay close to the prize, and reminded all whom his voice could reach that "Man should not regard the world as an appendage to himself, but himself as an appendage to the world."<sup>3</sup> In that temperate injunction we have the note of a new morality. It breathes a spirit which, apart from Judaism, belongs wholly to the modern world. Selfishness is a word of yesterday. When first the thought dawned upon the world it was expressed by the same word which it bears on the page of Philo;<sup>4</sup> our Saxon compound

<sup>1</sup> τὸ ἐαυτῶν προουργιάτερον ἐποίησαντο (Thucyd. iii. 109).

<sup>2</sup> *Leges*, 731, 732. Any one who studies this awkward involved passage will see clearly how Plato was groping after a new idea, while Philo was expressing one which he held in common with the modern world.

<sup>3</sup> *Quod Deus Sit Immutabilis*, ii. 396.

<sup>4</sup> i.e. *φιλαυρία*, which is also an English word, used by Holinshed in his account of the reign of Henry II., published 1577: "Here we see Philautie, or Self-love, which rageth in men so preposterouslie" (mark the appropriateness of this adverb, *which puts last that which should be first*) "that even naturall affection and dutie [are] quite forgotten." My attention has been called by Mrs. Watson, a grand-daughter of Coleridge's friend and host, Mr. Gillman, to a pencilling by the poet on a folio (Hacket's life of Archbishop Williams) which, with the passage evoking it, I give as a significant mark of the date, 1640. When the Presbyterian party, says the biographer, saw that the Archbishop was not Selfish, "it is a word of their own new Mint," &c. "Singular," comments Coleridge, "our common word Selfish is no older than the latter part of the reign of Charles I."



belongs to Protestant England. Its need was felt with that post-Reformation morality which corresponded to the right of private judgment and justification by faith. It expresses the moral dangers incident to the complete development of modern individuality; it lay beyond all the abundant wealth of Shakespearian thought; the word does not occur on his page. When he comes nearest it, he sees it as Ambition; if we seek for a Shakespearian parallel to the warning of Philo, we may find it best in the warning of Wolsey to Cromwell. The Jew devoid of genius saw farther into the moral world in the dawn of modern thought than did in its full noon the greatest genius that England has ever produced.

The Hebrew vision of an *I*, which is the ground and basis of all that we shadow forth when we say *We*, threw a new light on the meaning of Self. God is One in the sense in which there is no other One, and in sharing His Oneness we are united with each other. To the Hebrew the property of God was to go out of Self. He was the giver of Existence. He, the absolute Being, sought always to bestow that which could be given of true Being. He calls into existence the things that are not. He is known in the action which, if we are to describe it in the language of human analogy, is a perpetual quitting of Self.<sup>1</sup> He denies Himself in a mysterious but deeply important sense when He bids this varied Creation arise in which Man may find objects of worship and forget the Creator; and the claim on Man, "Go and do likewise," is enforced by His example no less than by His authority. Hebrew thought has given its bias to all moral speculation, not because the Hebrew mind was itself specially interested in moral questions, but because it sprang at its initial movement to a point above them, and came upon them from a higher view. And for ever afterwards Man is reminded, in all speculations on his destiny and character, how imperfect is that attention that sets up limits

<sup>1</sup> *De Mundi Opificio*, Mangey, i. 12, a quotation from Plato, *Timæus*, 29.

around its object, and in how deep a sense "the half exceeds the whole." 'The Jew bears witness to the human race that Man is but the half of that which Humanity implies and involves; and that unless we look beyond the boundaries of its history and the limits of its nature we shall find its deepest problems unintelligible.

Plutarch  
the nearest  
counterpart  
to Philo.

In Philo we have seen the spirit of Hebraism touched by the influence of Hellenism. We cannot find a typical example of the converse. The Jew at Alexandria was of necessity in some sense half a Greek, no Greek was anywhere of necessity half a Jew. But if we cannot set an analogous Greek specimen of cross fertilisation between the two antithetic races of the early world beside Philo, we may discover in a Greek born about a century after him, yet thrown back by all his more prominent associations on the background of that ancient life which many have known through him, a more complete representative of the trinity of Nations. In Plutarch there are two authors. The one best known records all that is most illustrious in the heroic history of Greece and Rome, and sets forth in flesh and blood the classical ideal of Virtue; the other, with whom we would linger here, may be called a herald of modern feeling in religion and morality. We take up his lives of Lycurgus, of Pericles, of Marius, of Sylla, and find ourselves among the aspirations of those ages which used to monopolise the title of Ancient History; we turn to his Moral Essays and find ourselves listening (so we might imagine) to a Broadchurch preacher of the late nineteenth century. This surprising range is reached not by individual penetration or prophetic insight, but by the spirit of his age, mirrored as it was in a widely sympathetic mind.

He incor-  
porates the  
idea of the  
Mediator.

Plutarch is the harmoniser, the reconciler of warring creeds, the interpreter for mutually unintelligible sectaries. The religions of the past engage his deep sympathies; he is, as we have seen, our main authority for all that is most interesting in the mythology of Egypt. But he looked

upon all mythology much as we do. He brought to the whole problem that key of language which we, finding so many doors fly open at its touch, have perhaps somewhat overstrained. He was the first to discover that key. The races which have different names for the sun, he urged, all see the same sun. Osiris and Bacchus are not different beings, any more than the sun which shines in Egypt is different from the sun which shines in Greece.<sup>1</sup> And then he carries the lesson a step further. To take Bacchus for wine and Vulcan for flame is to confuse the oar with the pilot: the loom with the weaver.<sup>2</sup> Bacchus, Osiris, and all their kindred are but varying aspects of the One Invisible God, "who shall become the Guide and King of men when they are delivered from the prison of the body and migrate into the distant land where He reigns alone."<sup>3</sup> While men are yet bound in the chains of material surroundings (he felt) they can discern Him only under these various aspects; they must express the great truths which they dimly perceive as to His nature under the guise of fragmentary metaphor, which belongs to mythology. The separate agencies seen in Nature are but various aspects of one primal Unity. Greek polytheism, Hebrew monotheism, may find here their meeting-point. God is manifold, and God is one.

Humanity, Plutarch felt, being the creation, could not share the eternity of God; men must know a beginning. But did it follow that they must know an end? It followed that they could not know an end. He who called them from nothingness and watched over them in their brief pilgrimage through this world—attending, as Plutarch believed, to the circumstances and character of every individual human being—was no maker of Adonis gardens—the seed sown in a shell where it withered as it sprung up. He did not expend his care on "the withering foliage of a day," as Homer had

Human immortality corresponds to Divine eternity.

<sup>1</sup> *De Iside et Osiride*, c. 67. See also 20.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* 64-66.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* 79.

mistakenly called the human race; He did not waste attention on beings "in whom is nothing permanent and steadfast, nothing akin to Himself."<sup>1</sup> God, for Plutarch, was not the God of the dead, but the living. Plutarch believed in an immortality of great names and great deeds; he is one of those who will ever be associated with the "great invisible choir" whose music he has helped us to hear. To this immortality in the memory of those who treasure up all recollection of the illustrious dead he has in his best known works rendered emphatic testimony; and he, at least, will not be charged with any tendency to underrate that self-survival whence streams a light undimmed throughout the space of a hundred generations. But for him this immortality was but a poor mockery, if it was the only immortality. The creator of Lycurgus and Pericles was a trifler, if all that remained of his work, in the age of Plutarch, was the memories that Plutarch had done so much to perpetuate. It was much, if it was a small part of their immortality. It shrank to nothing, if it was the whole.

Yet his wide and elastic sympathy, as is well known, took in even Atheism, as long as Atheism was a recoil from a Theism which mirrored in the Divine what was evil in humanity. The only familiar quotation from his moral works records his declaration that he would rather any one should say there was no such man as Plutarch than that Plutarch was malignant, revengeful, exacting endless deference, resenting petty slights, "ready to kill your child, if you fail in any expected attention to him."<sup>2</sup> Perhaps

The Love  
of God or  
the Holy  
Spirit.

<sup>1</sup> *De his qui sero a Numine punientur*, 17. "The Gardens of Adonis," says Professor Cheyne (*Isaiah in Polychrome Bible*, p. 146), "consisted of baskets of earth, sown with various plants, which quickly shot up, and as quickly withered in the sun. This was a symbolic representation of the fate of 'Tammuz yearly wounded,' and some idea of the importance attached to it may be gained from the procession on the evening of Good Friday, still common in Cyprus," where Christ has succeeded to Tammuz, or Adonis. An interesting illustration is appended to Professor Cheyne's note from the fragment of an ancient relief, showing a woman bearing a shallow basket on her shoulder filled with fruits and foliage which must manifestly wither.

<sup>2</sup> *De Superstitione*, 10.

Plutarch had in mind here the account of the sacrifice of Iphigenia, or the episode in Lucretius which ends with the often-quoted exclamation—

"Such were the crimes Religion could enjoin."

But if this preference of Atheism to Superstition be indeed a tribute to the great poet, it is by no means an expression of general sympathy with his attitude to Religion; some passages, indeed, seem a deliberate protest against it. "Those who think nothing comes to us from the gods, deprive prosperity of its joy, and adversity of its solace, they attempt to console us as one who in a storm at sea should assure his fellow-sufferers, 'The ship has no pilot, the Dioscuri do nothing against the violence of the waves, but this is a matter which need trouble no one, for the ship will soon be engulfed or shattered, and there will be an end of all emotion and all sensation.'"<sup>1</sup> The consolation to storm-tossed mariners is, that shipwreck is close at hand! From such consolation Plutarch turned to that thought of a Supreme Unity which the Roman world, if not he individually, owed to Jerusalem. In the sense of receiving a totally new idea, of course no race could owe it to Jerusalem, for none was wholly lacking in it. But in the sense that it was brought down from being an abstraction and became the foundation of all human relation, it belonged to the Jew, and became a part of the human inheritance through that faith which was the repudiated child of Judaism.

This sketch of Plutarch's theology, drawn from fragmentary expressions scattered up and down his moral works, would be misleading if it suggested any attempt on his part to unfold such ideas in their reasoned development. His interest was in human nature. But it was in human nature under a fresh light. The new sense of a Divine relation to

The Ideal  
Man a  
Redeemer.

<sup>1</sup> *Disputatio ne suavior quidem possit vivere secundum Epicurum*, 23. It seems like an answer to Lucretius.



every human being awakened—or possibly it was rather awakened by—a new sense of relation between human beings as such. Certain it is that the sense of brotherhood was new. It embodied ideas of claims and duties foreign to the ancient world. Humanity, in Plutarch's view, was not only weak and imperfect, it was diseased, and Philosophy was to be its healer. His meaning for Philosophy differed from Plato's as a knowledge of pharmacy differs from a knowledge of chemistry. What Plutarch sought was not the knowledge of truth as truth, but the knowledge of the truth that would heal. "With Philosophy as our guide we learn the right demeanour alike to those above and beneath us, to parent, wife, and child, the magistrates of our city, the slaves of our house. Philosophy it is which inspires reverence to parents, subjection to law, faithful love in marriage, in paternity, and in domestic rule."<sup>1</sup> The philosopher was the preacher and the confessor. "Do not avoid any teaching because it touches on some personal feeling, rather take this opportunity to remain after the rest of the audience and seek instruction in private. 'To attend to the philosopher only as long as his discourse is applicable to others is as if one should fly the surgeon's art after the first incision without suffering him to bind up the wound, and so forcing him to inflict nothing but pain. The word that wounds is the word that heals."<sup>2</sup> Those words embody in essence the doctrine of the Fall, and the promise of a Redeemer.

Comparison with the classic ideal of friendship.

The change of moral atmosphere is brought vividly home to the reader who compares the moral writings of Plutarch with those of Cicero. Both have treated the subject of Friendship in a separate essay, and Cicero's utterance remains a classic in that kind. It is full of sentences which affect the reader as a record of his own sweetest or saddest

<sup>1</sup> *De Educatione Puerorum*, 10.

<sup>2</sup> *De Recta Audiendi Ratione*, 9–12. The caution given on p. 33 must be especially borne in mind in every citation from Plutarch. He gives very diffusely the meaning here condensed.

experience; suggesting memories and reflections which interrupt the perusal, and from which he returns surprised at the few and simple words which, like a bar of music, has started him on that flight. When we turn to its successor we find nothing of this. Plutarch's style is diffuse and wordy, fine ideas with him are weakened by exhaustive expression, so that from a literary point of view the comparison is cruelly unfavourable to him. And yet we feel the greater writer shallow and external by his side. His essay, we discern, belongs to a new moral order. It is penetrated by the breath of Redemption; it calls on every true man to become a Redeemer. Cicero thought a man should choose the worthy to share his confidence; he never dreamt of a friendship which should raise the unworthy. That the duties of a friend included the office of the moral physician was a belief that would never have occurred to him,<sup>1</sup> or to much deeper moralists of the old world. It would not be accepted without large qualification by the moralists of our own day. But the first never imagined such a possibility, the last have seen it tried, and know its limits. The idea of Redemption, in the modern world, has percolated all the channels of human intercourse; and we have discovered that there are some which it does not fertilise. The discovery is the result of long experience; the exaggeration of a dawning ideal is, we must often repeat, inevitable. The first sight of a goal bestows new power of advance towards it; when we discover, as after a long Alpine walk, that the distant heights seem as remote as ever, we are apt to think that first stimulus even more fallacious than it is. In the following extracts from the new *De Amicitia*, the reader will surely recognise an infusion from some influence that is not devoid of momentum.

"The influence of a true friend is felt in the help which he gives the noble part of the nature; nothing that is weak

The friend should fill the office of the Healer.

<sup>1</sup> "Cum judicaveris, diligere oportet: non cum dilexeris judicare" (*De Amicitia*, 22.). How barren to modern feeling is the judgment that precedes love!

or poor meets with encouragement from him. While the flatterer fans every spark of suspicion, envy, or grudge, he may be described in the verse of Sophocles as sharing the love, and not the hatred, of the person he cares for." "He will not shrink from rebuke, and, where it is needed, even from putting rebuke into action. But let us, before we venture on rebuke, be careful to quit every emotion of selfishness, else when we would correct the errors of another we shall be merely complaining of our own wrongs. Next, let us be careful to tell our friend his fault between him and us alone. 'The detection of evil should always be secret. 'Might you not have said that in private?' remonstrated Plato with Socrates when he commented on some error in a disciple in company. 'And might not you,' Socrates retorted, 'have done the like to me?' 'The rebuke that is associated with needless disgrace is not merely useless, it roots deeper the evil from which we would deliver our friend. We should be careful of many other circumstances in expressing blame; we should watch for a fitting occasion, and not accustom ourselves to put every criticism into words at the moment of feeling it, or indeed at all; let us husband it rather for some fitting occasion, and not blunt the edge of rebuke by wasting it on trifles. Lastly, let us beware how we sever what is painful in intercourse from what is encouraging; never quit a friend with words of displeasure, let your last discourse with him be always kindly; never give to censure the painful distinctness of succeeding silence."<sup>1</sup>

Duties of  
the brother.

The new sense of a bond between all men did not with Plutarch submerge the sense of special bonds between some men. We have seen how highly he estimated the duties and claims created by the exercise of choice. The following extracts manifest an equal appreciation of those which human will can neither create nor destroy. His own family experience seems to have been peculiarly happy, but the difficulties of less fortunate kindred have never, surely,

<sup>1</sup> *De discernendo adulatorem ab amico*, 8-37.

been more sympathetically touched on than in his essay on Fraternal Love. It seems to embody reminiscences of the happiest brotherhood combined with experience of its difficulties and attention to its worst disasters.

"He<sup>1</sup> who deserts a brother is as one who cuts off a hand or foot. Our relations to the passing and the coming generation alike are poisoned by any intermixture of enmity here. How shall we reverence our parents if we love not their offspring? How shall we win reverence from our children if we exhibit that which of all else we wish to avoid? Our care to avoid all discord here should as far exceed our care to avoid discord with a friend as our carefulness for the living organism exceeds that for a mechanical work. This may, indeed, be repaired if it be injured, and the breach be as if it had not been," though elsewhere Plutarch fully recognises a difficulty which can seem small only in comparison with the greatest; "but that once subject to injury, if it be again made whole so far as is possible, yet bears for ever afterwards a sad memorial in the imperfect juncture, and the visible scar! And if the loss be final, it is irreparable. The lost brother can no more be replaced than the lost hand or eye. But suppose that we are unfortunate in this relation, what, an objector may ask, is to be done? Much may be remembered that shall keep the relation from shipwreck even where it is no unmixed source of blessing. The imperfection that adheres to all human relation may surely be borne most easily when it is exhibited in one whom we have not chosen. The affection that is founded on preference may be cast down by distaste, but that which merit did not attract demerit need not repel. Can we not overlook those faults for which, perhaps, our own parents are responsible? And let us be always on the watch to spare our parents the sight of evil in their children. A true brother will even accept his father's anger in the place of the erring one; he

<sup>1</sup> The following extract, I believe, gives a faithful abstract of the chapters from vii. to xvi. of the essay *De Fraterno Amore*.

will exert himself to put his brother's conduct in the best light, and find that excuse which will at once gladden the heart of a father (to whom nothing is sweeter than defeat in such an accusation), and restore a brother to his place. Towards his brother, however, his demeanour should be different; the earnest defence in absence justifies the zealous remonstrance to the face of the offender. The time will come when a common sorrow will afford a close bond for the brothers, but let them beware of the day of inheritance which must follow the day of bereavement. It may be a birthday of hatred, it may be a new day of love. Let the favoured brother, in such a day, remember the noble deed of Athenodorus, who not only divided his inheritance afresh with a brother whose property had been justly confiscated, but bore with a cheerful meekness the injustice and ingratitude with which his magnanimity was met. Let him recall them, and always the fame of the Socratic Euclid, who answered his brother's clamorous oath that he would be avenged on him: 'And may I perish if I do not overcome your hatred, and force me to love again as at first.' Let brothers find their joy, in all occasions of strife, in giving rather than receiving the victory; let not the sun go down upon their wrath, but let them imitate the Pythagoreans, who would never fail to join hands at the close of a day of discord. And let us ensure that discord, if it must come, shall spring from without. Let us root out every seed of bitterness within if strife is to spring up; at least give it no foothold in any feeling of the mind, and beware that your grievance be not the pretext rather than the cause of your division from one whom you have ceased to love."

Plutarch's  
conception  
of a re-  
deeming  
power.

Such warnings as these involve more than a heightened estimate of the claims of others, more even than a finer sense of justice. They not only emphasise and deepen the sense of virtues already accepted as such, they point to others which the men of the old world were as far from admiring as from practising. The beauty of a lowly



forgiving disposition, of the charity which "suffereth long and is kind," was as much hidden from their eyes as the beauty of wild scenery. Plutarch indeed assures us that we may learn from the Greek poets to bear insults with meekness, and the fact that he finds this sermon in Homer and Æschylus is a greater tribute to his value for the quality he supposes enjoined than if the injunctions were there. It is like a Broadchurch preacher finding Evolution in Genesis. This moral quality, which does not seek, as a mere rational morality would seek, to level the claims of self, but rather to invert them—this spirit of humility, of self-sacrifice, of forgiveness, by us inevitably associated with the spirit of Christianity, is here revealed as kindling aspiration in one who knew nothing of Christ. His writings, if any connection with Christian teaching could be claimed for them, would form a greater testimony to that influence than we can cite elsewhere, for the claim of need, the appeal everywhere and at all times of those conditions of poverty and weakness, and even of sin, which classic antiquity despised—these things are set forth by him just as they are by men who have drunk in the influence of Christianity for nearly two millenniums. We could hardly say as much for any other writing of his age. None of that time, few of any time, so vibrate to the sense of Redemption as a human duty. Yet if we say that a lecturer at Rome, late in the first century of Christianity, could hardly have been quite ignorant of it, that is all we can say.

The problem of the unconscious beside the conscious Christianity, not confined to the study of his writings, demands and suggests consideration. In his religious aspect Plutarch is a characteristic specimen of his age. Lucian, the Voltaire of that time, stands alone, as a solitary mocker, amid a world of reverent seekers. A devout, often mystic, Deism fills the world. Yet this atmosphere, so genial, one would have thought, to the growth of Christianity, proved in fact that of a frosty and backward spring. A long life,

His unconscious Christianity

contemporary with Plutarch's, might have been spent in watching for some sign that the new faith was to conquer the world. It was not more obviously advanced at the period of his death, about 120 A.D., than in his early manhood, some fifty years earlier. Its kindred faith—thus surely we may describe the religion of Plutarch—proved its antagonist. That kindred should prove antagonists is not unusual or surprising; in this case, perhaps, it is explicable from a consideration even of the outward history of the time.

Roman  
Law  
eclipsed  
Christian  
Faith.

To many among the learned and thoughtful of Plutarch's contemporaries, the teaching which we know as Christianity probably appeared an attempt to explain by small causes what they saw as the result of large ones. That a Jew should be the victim of the fanaticism of his fellow-countrymen, and afterwards seem to animate the sect founded by him with a new enthusiasm, would be to them nothing remarkable; while for the elements of a new moral life they might well feel it unnecessary to look beyond the events of their time. Humanity, for the first time, was a unity. The city states of the old world had given up their life to one great city state, whose protection ensured to Europe the blessings of peace and of law, while the crimes of its rulers chiefly affected a few distinguished men. It is from the spokesmen of these illustrious victims that we hear of those crimes, and perhaps, great as is their wickedness, we exaggerate their effect on general welfare. It is difficult to remember or believe that the Roman Empire dates the birthday of Humanity. "Humanity, in our sense of the word," says Grote, "cannot be predicated of any Greek." What! not of Socrates, of Sophocles, of Epaminondas, of Pericles? No; poet, hero, and statesman alike, they would fail if tried by that test. Turn to the narrative which is the occasion of Grote's remark, the hardly averted massacre of six thousand prisoners of war at Mitylene; read the debate which preceded the revocation of the order—the timid, disguised counsel of mercy, the bold and confident

arguments for severity, and you will recognise that Greeks could do what Englishmen cannot bear to see done, could witness unmoved what we can hardly bear to hear of at a distance. Of this hardness of heart the citizen framework of antiquity was at once cause and effect. It educated men in response to definite claim and also in the habit of disregarding terror, misery, suffering of every kind, when it was unaccompanied by definite claim. It deepened the channels of sympathy, but left its banks a desert. The Empire pulverised that world of autonomous city life to which the heart of antiquity clung with so passionate a tenacity; it was the frost which broke up the clods apart from which the seeds of national life could not have germinated. And at its best it seemed to do much more than this. The century which intervened between the last outburst of civil strife and the first crash of barbaric invasion seemed to promise more than we see fulfilled in this twentieth century of our era. It is always so with the destruction of barriers. The construction of new enclosures never quite answers to the hopes with which the plain was levelled. The death of the City, which long preceded the birth of the Nation, was in some sense the greater era of the two. A nation as we understand the word, a nation in the sense of England or France, was no more present to the eye of Plutarch than to the eye of Plato. We might say it was less present to the eye of Plutarch than it was to that of Polybius, who had before him, in the Achaian League, the possible germ of a nation. In Plutarch's day there seemed no possible basis of separate grouping between the family and the empire; but neither did there seem any need of such a basis. The limitations of national life would have seemed a grievous narrowing of a broad and expansive ideal to those who surveyed the world in the golden age of Roman Law. Their attention was fixed on humanity; they would have felt it a loss to consider the claims and the rights of anything smaller. No doubt they would in that belief have refused the true education of the human race. What human beings need in order

to combat the ever recurrent gravitation of selfishness is not a system of widely spread relations, but a principle of expansion in relationship, and this is the distinctive characteristic of a Nation, as contrasted with a City-State. But the mistake is natural, and while the Unity of Man was a new idea, it had a power which no idea can retain quite unimpaired in this disappointing world. Thus to one as much alive to the new sense of brotherhood as Plutarch, it would have seemed unnecessary to seek its cause elsewhere than in the very existence of the Roman Empire. The influences which destroyed barriers must have seemed to men who looked back to a condition in which those barriers were the framework of all corporate life, and who saw that another life had succeeded, an adequate cause of the whole change of feeling which was coming upon the world.

The historian of a rich and mighty past which was as remote to his spiritual vision as to ours would be especially disinclined to any acceptance of a point of view which threw this great change into the shade. The world he described was to him much what it is to us—a mighty world which had reached its consummation, and which he might survey through the intervening atmosphere of history. Separated from the men of the twentieth century by eighteen centuries, and from the earliest of his biographies by about half that interval, his figure is, by the ordinary reader, thrown backwards towards the heroic life he has depicted, but in truth this foreshortening inverts the significance of his true place in history. He is practically a modern. We cannot contemplate the characters of our civil wars as he contemplated those of the civil wars of Rome. The distance which separates us from Falkland and Elliot may be represented by the hours between morning and noon. The distance which separated Plutarch from Cæsar and Pompey, much shorter in the reckoning of chronology, must be figured as the dawn of a new day. It opens on a new heaven and a new earth.



## CHAPTER VIII

### THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

FROM the placid optimism of Plutarch we turn to a very different atmosphere, one of the murkiest through which we are led in an endeavour to follow the course of man's moral development. We reach a period of strange mystic speculation, a blending of the old and the new, of polytheism and monotheism, which has been well described as "La dernière apparition du monde ancien, venant combattre son successeur, avant de lui céder le genre humain."<sup>1</sup> It blends old and new, but it looks to the future, and confronts problems which had not dawned on the horizon of such men as Plutarch. In one sense indeed he is himself more modern than any thinker whom we have now to consider; his sermons (so we may not unaptly describe his *Moralia*) are in spirit those of a liberal Churchman of our day. But he is so modern because he had not begun to contemplate the problems we have laid aside as insoluble. He, and his like, never confronted the question which was an inevitable incident in the rise of a religion declaring Almighty Love to be the source of all existence,—Under such a Creator how could evil enter the world?

The Greek  
knew no  
Problem  
of Evil

On both sides the door was closed for them against such a problem. The word Almighty represented an idea not present to the mind of antiquity. Any approach towards it was unwelcome; the Greek mind, we have seen, never

The Artist  
race knows  
neither  
Omnipo-  
tence nor  
Sin

<sup>1</sup> *Histoire Critique du Gnosticisme et de son Influence*, par M. Jacques Matter, 2d ed. 1843, p. 23. A work of much value, but published before the discovery of the *Philosophumena* of Hippolytus, to which our knowledge of Gnosticism is so largely owing.



willingly admitted individual eminence, never steadily contemplated ultimate power. It shrank from the conception of the Infinite, the Absolute; it everywhere accepted, nay required, that of limit. And then, too, the race bequeathing to mankind all that is fairest in the domain of Art and the name which unites the Creator and the poet, was prepared to sympathise with the Creator of an imperfect world. For its vision the Creation was not bad; the Creator was not what a Christian means by good. The history of Greece is a brief and concentrated tragedy, and its art is proportionately rich in tragic elements; the great figures of the Athenian stage pass before us in solemn procession as we think of life's deepest sorrows. *Œdipus*, *Antigone*, *Electra* rise before the mind's eye to confute the notion that grief in the Greek world threw no shadow on Art; but then this very shadow is indispensable to Art. That Creation in which *Sophocles* had borne the prize from *Æschylus*, and *Euripides* from *Sophocles*, that work which was good according as it was rich in harmony, and therefore in contrast, must give a type of Creation in which the idea of holiness was inaccessible. The Creator could be good only in the sense in which *Æschylus* was a good poet, and from this point of view the evil in his work was one of its most important elements.

The Hebrew trust in the Creator equally excludes the problem.

If the idea of Almighty Love was altogether foreign to Greek thought, it was, to the other member of this trinity of races to which Europe owes its education, too familiar to be recognised as any source of intellectual difficulty. The Sabbath rest from Creation, according to the Hebrew Scriptures, brought a recognition that the result was very good, and nothing in the deep despondency manifest in these Scriptures tends towards any questioning of that primal declaration. What the Jew in his most despairing moment laments is, that man has chosen evil rather than good. He never feels that good is not there to choose. "O Lord, how glorious are Thy works," is

the deepest utterance of his faith; and when he has added, "An unwise man doth not well consider this, and a fool doth not understand it," he has made his utmost concession to the opposite feeling. He could pour forth the acknowledgment from a heart overflowing with reverent delight, because in the first place, the works of God never included for him his own errors and imperfections, or anything that resulted from them; and in the second place, Redemption was even more a vast hope than Creation a profound belief. The assertion, "I am the Lord thy God who brought thee up out of the land of Egypt," stands as the permanent aspect of the Divine Unity to the chosen race; and the deliverance from Egypt foreshadows more than a deliverance from Babylon, from Syria, from Rome; it is the first word of a promise whose full scope the son of that race saw to be for ever beyond the reach of all but a continually expanding grasp. From a logical point of view, this celestial hope should leave the previous condition from which deliverance was promised under a black shadow; Redemption should have darkened Creation. In fact it never did so. Between Creation and Redemption, both the work of God, man's disobedience lay in shadow sufficiently deep to bring out their brightness and conceal its own outline. The Jew never exactly knew what was implied in that disobedience. But still he meant something by it, and something that was adequate to explain all he wanted. He felt that the Will of God was good and the will of man was evil continually, and that was enough for him. His God had called man's spirit into being, and was its rightful Lord. He also had redeemed it from its evil, and was its Saviour. Man's own rebellion supplied the moral link between these ideas, and the Jew needed no other.

Thus while the problem never occurred to the Greek, we may say that it was solved for the Jew. But unite Hellenic dialectics to Hebrew faith, and the Creation becomes the nucleus of a tangle of perplexities. The

The fusion  
of Greek  
and  
Hebrew  
thought  
under

Roman  
rule en-  
forced the  
question.

Hebrew Creator looks on His work, and behold it is very good. The Greek Creator looks on his work, and knows that he has made it "as far as possible the fairest and best, out of things which were not good."<sup>1</sup> "Out of things which were not good"; there is no getting behind that. He was hampered by pre-existing conditions, and has done the best he could under the circumstances. It is the Origin of Species by natural selection from a different point of view, and under a different dialect. It has no real connection with the first chapter of Genesis.

A new hope  
roused a  
new sense  
of Evil.

When these heterogeneous conceptions were forced into a single framework, the truths in each were seen to be irreconcilable by logic, and that which for each separately was a narrative or a parable became a problem for both—a problem presented to minds at leisure for its contemplation as men's minds had never been before. While the birth of the new world roused perplexity, the death of the old left space for its development. The life of the City had, in the ages of classic antiquity, kept the minds of men far from all possibility of the kind of speculations thus originating, as the life of the Nation turns them away from it now. Evils enough there are in both the ancient and the modern world, but none are less inclined to ponder the origin of evil than those who are occupied in the endeavour to remove evils. The life of the State, in whatever form, throws ultimate questions into the shade. Between the earlier and later form of this life of the State intervenes a life—that of the Church which depends on them. The dawn of this new life coincides with the long blank which followed the passing away of the old; but the dawn was very slow, and seemed to the ordinary gaze only the lingering twilight from a long past sunset. The city was dead, the nation was unborn. In all such blanks of life we shall discover that the heart of man craves achievement far more persistently than enjoy-

<sup>1</sup> Plato, *Timæus*, 53.

ment. As long as life hurries on to some goal, its bitterness does not pass into perplexity. It is when the movement of life is at an end, when we look at the whole under the cold light of critical judgment, and find it inscribed everywhere with the characters of failure, that we are led to question, Why is life so poor a thing? <sup>1</sup> Life for the toiling millions was no harder then than it had ever been; but to the thinking hundreds it was darker. A pause in political interest left them at leisure to brood over the problem, Why did such a world ever begin to exist? The reign of Hadrian bore the contrast with men's anticipations of a Kingdom of Heaven rather better than the reign of Nero; but the difference between the world at its best and worst almost vanishes when we compare either with the ideal of Redemption.

It would not be the first generation of Christians who felt thus. Their experience may be compared rather to that of the dawn than the sunrise, the watchers who find their vision enlightened by that mystic shadowless glow which precedes the emergence of the light-giving orb. What occupied their hearts and minds was the idea, not of Creation, a mysterious event far off in the remote past, and unlike anything in experience, but an actual transforming influence allied with a vast hope, and stripping all that men most dread of its terrors. Redemption would have its profound disappointment, but not while moral energy was absorbed in anticipation of the return of the Lord and the visible manifestation of His kingdom. With the fading of that hope and the shock of finding that a community linked by the bond of Redemption so little differed from any mere secular aggregate of imperfect and erring men, there came upon the world a new sense of the power and mystery of Evil. The contradiction which we drop out of sight emerged with the

Influence  
of a colossal  
disappointment

<sup>1</sup> Glöser, in a work which has suggested much that follows, *Urchristenthum*, says that these times "gehörten zu den traurigsten, welche die Weltgeschichte kennt." I cannot but think that he here confuses abundance of speculation on evil with abundance of material for it.

distinctness of novelty. The sun creates shadows, and when it rises they are conspicuous. When the belief in many gods first concentrated itself into a belief in God, the world, in its new character of a *Divine work*, showed forth, as never before, the dark places which kept it from being a satisfactory exhibition of Divine perfection. As a background to the varied movement of human and Divine activity it was well enough; call it the product of Almighty Will, and it became filled with disaster and failure.<sup>1</sup> And under the influence of this profound disappointment, this deadening of all secular interest, this fading of spiritual hope, the minds of men turned towards speculations as to the way in which this world came into existence—speculations coloured by a sense that its existence had from the first been in some sense a calamity, that Creation was either a blunder or a necessary evil.

Hellenic  
and He-  
braic ex-  
planations  
of Evil.

From this time forward we may trace two lines of theory on the Origin of Evil. On the one hand, the antithesis of Spirit and Matter presented itself as a symbolic expression of the contrast of Good and Evil, precluding the need of its being regarded as a problem; on the other, Evil was seen as the necessary background or shadow of Free Will. Supposing the Creator had to work upon uncreated material, and confronted an impersonal sharer of His eternity, it would always be possible to see in this antithesis to God, the source of Evil. And then, on the other hand, to a mind for which the primary aim was Righteousness, Evil, so far from being a *thing*, must be the very opposite of a thing. If to *be* good means to choose goodness, it must be also possible to choose evil, and evil must potentially be there to choose. The first of these views may be called the Hellenic, and

<sup>1</sup> Eusebius, writing under Constantine, in naming the work of a certain Maximus, Bishop of Jerusalem, on the Origin of Evil, says that this is the question so much agitated (πολὺ θρύλλητον) among heretics (*Ecclesiastical History*, v. 27). Arnobius, writing a little earlier against the Pagans, cites as a familiar reproach against Christianity—Whence then are all these calamities? (*Adv. Gentes*, ii. 54, 55, 65). The one question would naturally pass into the other.



the second the Hebrew attempt to explain the origin of Evil. Neither is confined to a single race, and, opposed as they are, it has been found possible to combine them. On the whole, however, we may say that the spirit of the Greek is on one side, as the spirit of the Jew on the other. The first appeals to a logical and artistic nature; the second, to one attuned to the life of holiness and a deep sense of Sin. For the Artist, Sin is no more than the throb of life's pulsation, the warp of its woof, the condition and prelude of all that is desirable and excellent. The evil of Sin cannot indeed be entirely hidden from any race or any individual; and in a race whose every utterance has the resonance of genius, it will always be possible to find in some undertone a definite protest against any view that excludes a deep part of our nature. But that swift inversion of sympathies which is essential to dramatic genius precludes any deliberate concession that impulses, which fill life with meaning, have no fitting place anywhere. When the Greek had to explain Evil he could not find refuge in human Will. There could be no Evil in Freedom; Evil lay in that which opposes itself to Freedom—the world of Necessity, the absolute antithesis to and negation of Will, the blind world of Matter.

It is with the utmost difficulty we put ourselves in the place of those who found any intellectual satisfaction in tracing human ills to the fact that man is clothed in a material body, and inhabits a material universe. The experience of life shows us spite, envy, and unkindness, flourishing where animal need and physical temptations are unknown, and forces upon us the conviction that hatred is an emotion no less spiritual than love. It is far less common, and ordinary intercourse permits us to fancy, at times, that what binds us each to each is spiritual sympathy and what separates us is material need, but to keep the fancy as a settled conviction is possible only to the young or inexperienced, or morally short-

Difficulties  
of the  
Hellenic  
view

sighted. When we have allowed that the fact of man's material organisation and environment is the cause of a large part of what is wrong, and of a still larger part of what is painful, we appear to have made the utmost concession possible towards the association of Matter with Evil. If we were obliged to have any theory on the connection of the two things, we should incline to the very opposite; the sense of necessity involved in our material environment is to modern feeling an apology for wrong; hunger is in our time an excuse for almost anything, it must always be an excuse for much. The Greek thought that the spirit should rule the body as the master the slave. We can see that that is another way of saying that the body should not be a part of the material world.

its claims.

Yet there must be some meaning in the belief of the greatest thinkers of the old world. 'The human race is not more human at one time than another. Its relation to truth is a permanent one. It is a futile though a common method of study to fix a date at which thought begins to be either true or false. The contemporaries of Socrates, of Augustine, and the thinkers of a much later period, all believed in some evil bias inherent in the physical framework of life. It is worth an effort to understand the beliefs that have influenced many generations of mankind, even after deciding that they are erroneous.

its kernel  
of truth.

The desired explanation must be sought in the unquestionable fact that the external world is the world of necessity. Desire here is no agent. 'To desire justice is in some sense to become just. 'To desire health, whatever we think of the influence of the mind on the body, is certainly not to become well. The spiritual universe stands in relation to earnest desire, the material universe to accurate knowledge. At any moment this material environment may become a dungeon to the best and wisest of men. For the frame that is racked with rheumatism or neuralgia, hunger or thirst, is a prison to the spirit in a sense that no

unsatisfied desire of the heart is. In all the desolation of bereavement a hungry man is glad of food, and a half-frozen man of fire; in a paroxysm of bodily pain he can be glad of nothing. In man's bodily condition there is an element not only of necessity, but in some sense even of what appears like falsehood. We are obliged to feel for the moment as if some sharp pain which we have to endure for a short time were a great thing, and some large change affecting the permanent fate of millions were a small thing. It is not anything wrong which thus coerces feeling, it is the very nature of our physical organisation.

And then, moreover, it must be remembered that in this world of necessity we are all, the least as well as the most unselfish of men, in some sense rivals. The lifeboat and the fire-escape will not hold more than a certain number of bodies, one mouthful of bread will fill only one mouth. Envy, says Virgil to Dante in *Purgatory*<sup>1</sup>—and by envy the poet seems to mean all that separates man from man—arises

Inexorable-  
ness of  
physical  
need.

"Because men set their wishes on a mark  
Wherein companionship is one with loss."

To a certain extent this is what no one can help doing. While the delight given by beauty in nature or art, by music, by knowledge, by friendship, by every kind of goodness, is increased when it is shared, the opposite is true of all material objects of desire. This holds good for saint and for sinner, for genius and for idiot, for criminal and philanthropist. All, so far as they are animals, want something that none other can have at the same time; and all are animals throughout their earlier stages; while maturity leaves them, good and bad alike, still liable to a hundred accidents, reducing them again to this animal condition. Whole classes pass their lives in that region "wherein companionship is one with loss," and only under the most favoured circumstances does any one pass through life and *never* feel he

must do without something he needs because there is not enough of it for two. The mere fact of man's bodily environment thus becomes a source of separation between man and man, which is perfectly inevitable, and for which no man is responsible; and while we contemplate that fact and nothing besides, we may call this bodily organisation evil.

But  
Physical  
Science  
hides the  
difficulty.

These are considerations applicable to all generations of mankind, but there are others which soften and hide the difficulty for our own. We cannot pronounce the words Physical Science without remembering that this supposed origin of Evil was a chaos to the ancients and is a Cosmos to us. The material world is now rather the field where Will finds its exercise than the barrier which forms its limit. We confide an important message to the electric telegraph, and know that it will be transmitted at least to the end of the wire. If we had entrusted it to our best friend he might have forgotten to deliver it. Every time that we cross the barrier between things and persons we are reminded that it is only on the ground of things that we can make our reckoning with absolute security; our antithesis between the two is between the world of safe anticipation and the world of what we call accident. People are whirled thousands of miles without anxiety or effort, because steam never fails to move what impedes its expansion; and if they are mutilated or killed on the journey, it is generally because some human being has not done the thing he was expected to do. A Greek knew no familiar illustration of what we may call the convenience of dealing with *things*. Where we turn to machinery, he turned to the reluctant service of some captive, torn from his home or brought up under the degradation of bondage. All the convenient certainty that we associate with man's control over the forces of nature he associated with the control of one class over the will of another. The associations of order and regularity which we associate with the material world



no characteristic of it for him, and the change from his world to ours involves a revolution of thought.

To modern thinkers matter is the incarnation of Force; to ancient thinkers it was the contrary of Spirit. Of the wonderful cycle of laws which it has revealed to us, the only one which they knew gravitation—was supposed by them to be a peculiarity of the only region of space subject to disorder and imperfection. Those silent, ceaseless movements which for our eyes inscribe the midnight sky with testimony to the universal domain of gravitation, exhibited to theirs its narrow limits. The movements that end and the movements that continue had to their conception nothing in common. Their knowledge was as misleading as their ignorance; the laws of Space, as they become confused the moment they are illustrated in any material substance, encourage the belief that Matter knows no law. Our modern investigators of Nature would have appeared to the Greek to make exactly the same mistake as a man who cut triangles in some rough substance to test the problems of Euclid. The world of Matter was the world of multiplicity, of confusion; truth, if attained here, was attained only by accident.

Change  
in the  
conception  
of Matter

If modern science has ennobled Matter we may say that in a certain sense modern morality has materialised Spirit. The unity of the ancient world—the State—was something invisible. The unity of the modern world—the Individual—is clothed in flesh and blood. Thus the bodily organisation has taken for the Nation an importance totally unknown to the City. The Nation itself is as much an unseen being as the City—indeed in some sense it may be called more so, it is less distinctly associated with familiar scenes and images, and far more approaches the vagueness of an abstraction. Nevertheless, it is an undeniable truth that the Nation and the Individual are correlatives. The invisible City, by the mere fact that she relegated, without daring to condemn, many

Change in  
the moral  
starting-  
point



individuals to the world of *things*, withheld all sacredness from the person. The invisible Nation, opening her doors to every new-comer, concedes to every human being an inherent right to a recognition and respect unknown to the City. The dignity of the Citizen precluded the dignity of the Man. This consideration explains much of the unfeelingness of Greece and Rome. The moral standard which is formed under attention to individual claim enforces a reverence for the physical environment of every soul of man that was unknown to antiquity. It is not that asceticism is thereby rendered impossible; far from it. Asceticism is no more than the sense of sacredness in the body allied with a desire for sacrifice, and its prevalence in the mediæval as compared with the classical world is an illustration of the new importance of pain. A keen sense of its horror readily passes into a keen sense of its blessing. The nature to which it is comparatively insignificant is equally remote from both.

Influence  
of the  
change on  
literature.

The influence of such a change of standard is felt beyond the region of morals in the narrow sense of the word. The new influence is discernible in taste and curiosity as well as in matters of the conscience; much of the result is seen in the contrast of ancient and modern literature. We have noted how carefully the ancient drama avoids that element of surprise which the latter demands. Englishmen and Frenchmen are interested in the vagaries of *men*, the Greeks cared only for the laws which exhibit and define the nature of *Man*. Idiosyncrasy had little or no interest for them.<sup>1</sup> A rich Shakespearian element was present in the oldest Greek poem, but the national genius, as it developed, stripped this away as ruthlessly as a gardener the blossoms on a young fruit tree, permitting such survivors as justified

<sup>1</sup> I find a telling illustration of this in the flat and lifeless character given to the most brilliant personality of Athens in the dialogue attributed to Plato called *Alcibiades*.

the selection, but leaving the result one we could not copy without a sense of dulness. Our path is in the opposite direction; with us the interest in idiosyncrasy has developed with the growth of our literature, as in Athens it faded. The modern dramatist aims at it more than Shakespeare did, and modern fiction depends upon it. If it appear far-fetched to associate this interest with a new reverence for the bodily organism, this is because imagination is often too feeble to track the subtle influences which bind into a single whole the body and soul of Man.

Such considerations as these may help us to enter into a certain imaginative sympathy with those who held the view of Matter which connected it with evil. We have called it a Greek view; it is rather Oriental than Greek, but as deeply tinging the thought of Plato, and entirely absent from all characteristically Hebrew feeling, it may be reckoned as Hellenic for our purpose here. We have now to enter on a group of speculations which demanded this view as its groundwork, though, as will be seen, those who entertained them did not always recognise this. Their central idea is not so much the antithesis of Spirit and Matter as that conception of Nature, in its modern sense, which is intermediate between the two. They saw all being under a threefold aspect, the good and the bad corresponding to the realms of Spirit and Matter, and between them the intermediate world of Nature, which was associated with either side according to the varying point of view. God is the Fountain of Unity, and Spirit bears the impress of that oneness which is complete alone in Him. His complete antithesis is the world of dead Matter, in which Unity is impossible (here all philosophy must be with them; dead matter can never afford the idea of Unity)—the world of mere multiplicity, of confusion opposite to God (and here modern Science is violently against them, finding all confusion end on the threshold of the material universe). In the midst is the intermediate world of physical life which we know as

Gnosti-  
cism

Nature. Corresponding to this threefold division of the universe it was believed there was a threefold division of humanity. There were some spiritual men—men who belonged wholly to the realm of Order, of Unity, whose transit through the confusion of material existence was a mere excursion into a foreign country; there were also material men, beings belonging wholly to this realm of Disorder, and incapable of ascending to the realm of Spirit; and there was an intermediate race, the natural men, capable of sinking to the lower or rising to the higher spheres—occupying, in fact, just that position of choice which the ordinary view assigns to the whole human race. Or, again, these three divisions were applied not quantitatively to the human race, but qualitatively to every individual; in every man, it was said, there was a spiritual man—a germ of life and principle of immortality, a seed of God and spark of Divine fire given from the realms above the Creator; secondly, a physical or animal man, *i.e.* the soul, the work of the Creator; thirdly, material man, the seat of passion, a nature doomed to perish. Gnosticism, to give the group of various speculations their common title, is dualism diluted by the Greek reluctance to confront Evil, and in fact combining, in an illogical harmony, both answers to the Problem of Evil which we have called the Hebrew and the Greek, though not in equal proportions. As such it tends towards a more complete dualism, in which the ignorant Creator, and that whole natural region which is his domain, should disappear, and the world of Spirit should stand face to face with the world of Matter, as Good to Evil. But it is the earlier and less logical phase which has the greatest interest for the student, and on which we may now be permitted to linger.

Its suitability to its own age.

Gnosticism is a faith of which, almost all original documents being lost, we hardly know more than would be known of the science of fifty years ago by one who judged it from quotations made by the clerical opponents of scientific

men. But one who has followed the convergent lines of Greek and Jewish thought to their common ground finds the fragments, left by opponents in tearing it to pieces, safe stepping-stones between the mythology of the Old world and the beliefs of the New. We see the ideas of Philo blend with the memories of Hesiod; we watch the Powers of the Invisible and Formless One take shape in a new mythology, shutting off the awful abyss of Deity from any contact with the base world of matter, interposing an intermediate emanation system whereby the One should be screened, as it were, from direct responsibility for the realm of multiplicity, of evil. We see these strange abstractions hover on the edge of personification, and sometimes pass it; we have to do with beings so faintly personal that we may at any moment re-translate them into the language of allegory. Pallid abstractions as they are, they did yet satisfy, to some extent, the instinct that craves the Many. The tinge of Greek colouring is to our eyes almost invisible; it lingers as the traces of colour discovered by archæologists in buried sculpture; yet still it gave some shadow of satisfaction to minds steeped in Hellenic feeling, and yearning after variety in the Heavens so recently emptied of their bright inhabitants. Even this shadowy and sublimated Polytheism had doubtless its attraction for many a spirit hesitating on the borders of the new creed, and sending looks of backward longing towards the varied play, the endless dramatic interest, of the old. The lights of Paganism were growing dim, the light of Christianity was growing strong; the "endless genealogies" of the Gnostics formed for many minds a harmonising medium between the Polytheism on which so many of their tendencies had been formed, and the simple, perhaps it seemed to them the meagre, creed which had succeeded it. With the reluctance with which we sometimes greet the morning light that dispels a fanciful dream, many half Christians must have looked up to a Divine world that had suddenly become (as it would seem to them) almost

empty, and sighed for the rich plastic variety of an Olympus that mirrored the passions, the instincts, the hopes and fears, that quicken our human world. The strange beings who figure in Gnostic legends formed an intermediate mythology, coming between the worship of the Gods and the worship of the Saints, and satisfying the instincts which rebelled against an empty Heaven.

The hidden knowledge.

What the new teachers meant by calling themselves Gnostics was, that they were initiated into the hidden knowledge of the One beyond the Many. That God was One was being taught on all sides; they inculcated the lesson that, being One, He is hidden in remote inaccessibility; that the divine world from which this human world has issued is the world of multitude, of division, of plurality, and hence its evil. Nothing can seem more hostile to the spirit of the Hebrew belief, yet it was by a true Jew, under Greek influence, that this belief had been read into his Scriptures. Philo had discovered, in the first chapters of Genesis, indications that the creation of the world was the work of a manifold group, that God was only partially the Maker of so imperfect a being as man. This seemed to him manifest in the expression in which the Hebrew Scripture narrates man's creation.<sup>1</sup> "Rightly is God represented as saying to His subordinates, to whom He deputed the formation of the mortal part of the soul, 'Let us make man in order that the blessings of the soul might be referred to him, its evils to others.'" Something within man, he thought, was created by God, but it would not be true to say that God created him. Man, as he lives in this world, is connected with God only by intermediate emanations; the Divine influence is weakened when it reaches him as that of a magnet through a succession of iron rings.<sup>2</sup> His creator is connected with the Divine world, but is not God. The very conception of creation implies degeneracy—an un-

<sup>1</sup> Philo, *De Confusione Linguarum*, Mangey, iii. 196.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., *De Mundi Opificio*, i. 96.



Jewish thought, but yet the refuge of a true Jew, confronted with the omnipotent seduction of Greek culture, under the rule of Rome.

If the thought was un-Jewish we might have supposed that still more would it be un-Greek. The creative race would not appear likely to underrate the rank of the Creator. But the Harmony of Opposites remains in every direction the clue to Greek thought. Whatever is vividly felt, is there vividly opposed. To a race of Artists, Creation, in every sense, is a necessity, and yet the suspicion that Creation implies degeneracy may be often discovered in Greek thought. Plato's indifference to the whole physical universe is but the intellectual expression of this doubt. If the universe had been, in the full sense of the word, a creation of God, it would have been, as in his view it was not, a worthy object of attention to Man. We sum up his whole view of what we should call Nature when we remind the reader that his account of the material world and its origin is the only work in which he does not take his beloved master as a guide. Socrates appears in the *Timæus*, not, as in every other dialogue, as the critical investigator, but merely as the attentive listener. To use his own homely metaphor, he ceases to practise his mother's trade; he delivers no pregnant mind of nascent truth; he greets mature opinion; he does not look for infant knowledge. From the time that Timæus begins his exposition Socrates remains as silent as some modern man of science beneath the pulpit of an eloquent preacher; there is no occasion for him to confute a plausible set of guesses on a subject respecting which nothing can be known. Man cannot know what God has not, in the fullest sense of the word, created. God did the best possible with matter; but the disorder is still latent in the order; ever and anon it recurs, and with it the thought that the world where it reigns is not the true home of Man. The very inconsistencies apparent in the various forms taken by this Platonic belief in a Fall attest

Its prophecy in Plato

its strong hold on the mind of Plato. Perhaps the work of Creation was given up, at the moment when Man was to be called into existence, into the hands of inferior deities;<sup>1</sup> or perhaps it is in the course of history that we must trace this degeneracy; the Creator guided the world at first, but when He let it go, its course was reversed, and it soon forgot His guidance.<sup>2</sup> Or else (and this version of the belief would appear to express his deepest thought) the birth of every human being is a repetition of the Fall; each soul, as it clothes itself in flesh, descends from Heaven.<sup>3</sup> "Perchance in truth the dead are happiest," Socrates concedes to a scornful antagonist who has made the statement as a jeer; "truly thou sayest that life is an awful thing."<sup>4</sup> The suspicion led towards a feeling the very opposite of the Greek sense of life; but for that very reason it was familiar to the race whose whole life knew the rhythm of pulsation.

and in  
other  
Greeks.

The discovery, that to feel the brightness of Life is but one step from giving a welcome to Death, may be made in Greek literature elsewhere than on the page of Plato. "The Divinity thus gave a token that it is better to die than to live," says Herodotus, when he has told a bright child-like legend quoted above,<sup>5</sup>

"Who shall declare if seeming Life be Death,  
If seeming Death be but the dawning Life?"

asks Euripides,<sup>6</sup> in hardly more poetic words. He may here have been thinking of the verse of Empedocles, who, in describing earth, uses himself the very words applied by Homer to the "joyless abodes" in which Agamemnon sighed<sup>7</sup> for the life of a slave on earth. Life and death, Empedocles thinks, have been inverted; it is the world of the shades that we inhabit here; our home is elsewhere. Earth, in truth, is Hades; this is the world below; life and

<sup>1</sup> *Timæus*, 43.

<sup>2</sup> *Politicus*, 272, 273.

<sup>3</sup> *Republic*, 619.

<sup>4</sup> *Gorgias*, 492.

<sup>5</sup> See p. 170.

<sup>6</sup> In a Fragment quoted by Plato in the *Gorgias*, 492.

<sup>7</sup> *Od.*, xi. 94.

light are to be sought in other realms. "Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting;" it is by a fall that we enter on this realm of death, and that which we call birth, in truth, is dying to the splendour of our original home, and awakening to a dreary exile, to an existence "subject to mad strife." Life in this world is but banishment, and banishment must have been earned by crime. What sin did the Spirit commit in its mysterious Paradise that it should be hurled downwards to Earth? The poet answers this question indistinctly, or at least the fragments we possess of his poem bring us the answer in an indistinct form. It must have been some awful guilt which took the place of Man's first disobedience, and most readers will feel it the more impressive that its character is mysterious. Yet, though more awful than the sin of Adam, its consequences are less dark. The Heaven of which life has deprived the poet is one to which death shall restore him, if the intermediate world of Purgatory be rightly used. "The amplitude of bliss," from which he has been hurled earthwards, lies before him as well as behind him; he is separated from his past Heaven by a long period of evolution, during which he has traversed the course of animated existence, and has reached the pinnacle of humanity, whence he may take his Heavenward flight. The dream is one of those which haunt poetry in every age, and it is difficult for readers to whom it is familiar in this form to say how much more than poetry it may have been in the early ages when all deep thought naturally took a poetic form.

The dream of Empedocles and of Plato seems repeated in a Gnostic hymn, if according to the most intelligible interpretation, we may read this mystic poem as an allegory of man's life in this world.<sup>1</sup> It may especially

Revelation  
of the  
Gnostics.

<sup>1</sup> Possibly by the Syrian poet Bardesanes, to whom, however, Hort (*Dictionary of Christian Biography*) would refuse the title of Gnostic. It was translated from the Syriac by Professor Bevan, and the English is given in what I have found far the most interesting work on Gnosticism (*Fragments of a Faith Forgotten*, by G. R. S. Mead, 1900, p. 406), to which I desire to make the fullest and warmest acknowledgments. It is the first work I have met with which seems to me to do justice to the

be compared with the fragment above cited of the poem of Empedocles, being evidently the same idea cast into the form of an allegory. It narrates the expedition of an eastern Prince "down into Egypt" in order to bring back a pearl guarded by a dangerous serpent, the sleep of forgetfulness into which he falls, his awakening by a mysterious letter sent him by his parents which "flies in the likeness of an eagle" and becomes his guide on his homeward way. Before that final return to his home in the East, he strips off "the filthy and unclean garb of the Egyptians" (the body) and leaves it in their country. Egypt, it is said, is a common Gnostical symbol for the material environment of man, and this "going down into Egypt" would, according to this view, be a natural symbol of a human birth, the vile and filthy garment being left behind on the return of the Spirit to its pristine home. The parable illustrates and is illustrated by the parables in the Gospels. The "one pearl" guarded by the terrible serpent is surely that spirit of faith which can be exercised only in the entanglement of material surroundings, and the "loud breathing serpent," the passionate impulses by which it is hidden. The letter which arouses the soul from its earthly slumber and is his guide homeward, may be regarded as the Gnosis itself—the revelation to man of his lofty origin, and his eternal home, or if we said the Gospel we should not in any important respect alter the symbolism. The contents of the letter would suit both interpretations, if indeed they may here be said to differ. It begins with the appeal—

"Up, and arise from thy sleep!  
Call to mind that thou art a son of kings!  
See thy slavery! Remember the pearl  
For which thou didst speed to Egypt."

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Gnostics, and is written with what, so far as I am able to judge, is a rare combination of enthusiasm and learning. It was not published when the first editions of this book appeared, but may be taken as the basis of the following sketch as it appears now, though here and there I differ in opinion from Mr. Mead.

Nor is the appeal made in vain—

“It flew and alighted beside me,  
And became all speech :  
At its voice I arose from my sleep,  
I took it up and kissed it,  
I broke its seal, and read ;  
And according to what was traced on my heart  
Were the words of the letter written.  
I remembered that I was a son of kings,  
And my free soul longed for its natural state ”—

to which, under the guidance of the letter, the enfranchised soul returns, bringing back with it the treasure for the sake of which that eternal home had been quitted.

We have said that this mystic hymn recounts in allegory the history of an individual soul, banished from heaven by birth and restored to it by death, in possession of a treasure previously unknown—that treasure which the Saviour described under the very same symbol, “the pearl of great price,” which the seeker after true riches parts with every other possession to secure. Something which makes this mortal life worth while enduring—we narrow our interpretation not only of our unknown Gnostic’s meaning, but of Christ’s, if we attempt to express it in our own poor words more definitely. We may see in this hymn a Gnostic parable of Creation as well as of Birth. As every human life, according to this view, in some sense originates in a fall, so does the life of humanity. Birth commemorates the fall of a man ; Creation, the Gnostics imagined, commemorated the fall of a God. Their view of Creation may be described as the first sketch for Milton’s magnificent picture, the supernatural figures crowding out the natural. In truth, all that is merely human in “Paradise Lost” is matter of secondary interest. “I beheld Satan fall from Heaven,”<sup>1</sup> almost the only words in the Bible which give the groundwork for

The  
Creation  
and the  
Fall

<sup>1</sup> Luke x. 18.



the poem, indicate its true scope. Satan is its hero; his fate forms the focus of interest. His abode is the real world; it is called Hell, but it is not, like Dante's Hell, a place of actual torment; we feel it a world of exile, but also of grand possibilities of loyal devotion and of varied aims. Its inhabitants, though defeated, are still Gods; and even in their crime there is something that is majestic and impressive. The world itself is in some sense the result of their sin; a human race is called into existence to replace a fallen Divine race, so that a vast calamity is commemorated in the very existence of this framework of Being in which man finds his home. Thus man's very existence is the memorial of a Fall; his own lapse is but the echo and consequence of one of vaster proportions. The Spirit who has himself decided it to be "better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven," inspires the creatures who in an indirect way owe their existence to him with vague spiritual ambition, and throughout the whole poem the interest lies in the conquest—such, in truth, the world is—achieved by the mighty Tempter.

The Demi-  
urgus and  
Satan.

To translate the immortal poem back into the allegories of forgotten mystics we must make up in logic what we lose in imagination. Every intelligent reader of *Paradise Lost* must feel that in some sense the Creator of this actual world in which men live is, according to Milton, not God, but Satan. And but that the Gnostic Demiurgus is not an evil, only an ignorant being, this is a belief of all Gnostic systems. Almost all interposed a long series of Emanations between God and the world, and assumed an eternal substratum of creation; while all ascribed the existing universe to an ignorant and blundering Creator, whose mischievous, restless activity had bridged the gulf separating the world of Unity or Spirit from the world of mere Multiplicity or Matter; and had thus conferred upon this realm a principle of development which should never have passed into union with it. And further, all recognised that while

Nature is the mere result of this ignorant activity, in Man there is something higher. He is the work of the Creator, so far as his bodily organism, and what we should call his mind, is concerned; but an influence has been shed upon the work of which the Creator is not conscious; it is as with those creations of genius embodying inspiration which their author dreamt not of, and expressing ideas which seem to come rather through than from the mind that gives them shape. The world is the mistake of a mighty blunderer, but Man has a loftier origin. Like the royal nursling of the wolf, he owns a lineage elevated far above all that surrounds him. He dwells as an exile in the only home he knows, and awaits a mysterious recall to regions at once strange and yet in some sense familiar. The Creator, so superior to Man in Power, is in the true qualities of his inmost being distinctly his inferior. He is the author of Man so far as Man belongs to the realm of Nature, of which the Demiurgus is indeed the type and representative; but a seed from a higher region is hidden in the nature of Man, and so far he is a revelation to the Spirit of Nature of that which lies beyond and above him, a revelation complete only when the Redeemer is revealed to the Creator.<sup>1</sup>

"I feel that I am happier than I know," says Milton's Adam. The Gnostical creator of Adam might have felt that he was greater than he knew. He was the magnified ideal of genius or inspiration, that magic power by which the mind is enabled to transcend its own boundaries, and become the expression and an instrument of an influence larger than itself. Its work may be larger than itself, for a higher power is active within it, often unconsciously to

The  
ignorant  
Creator

<sup>1</sup> See Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, Book i. c. 8, and Irenaeus *contra Haereticos*, I, ii. *passim*. The other authorities for Gnosticism among the Fathers are Tertullian in various works and Plotinus, *Ennead* ii. 9, an interesting picture of Gnosticism from a Neo Platonic point of view. But the best authority we have is Hippolytus, *Refutationes omnium Haereticum librorum decem quae supersunt* (Duncker and Schneidewin, 1859). This work, discovered at a convent on Mount Athos in 1842, and printed at the Clarendon Press nine years later as a work of Origen, is now ascribed to the martyr-bishop of that name.

the agent. The Jew at Alexandria had already been taught to look for an inspiration in all his deepest utterance, which revealed to him a world beyond himself. "Often," says Philo,<sup>1</sup> "I have found my mind entirely empty and barren when I wished to write, and was obliged to retire without leaving a finished sentence. And often, on the other hand, coming quite empty, I have suddenly been full, thoughts pouring upon me like rain, so that, as by a divine inspiration, I prophesied, and became ignorant of all things around me and of myself." What the Jew felt of himself the Gnostic believed of the Creator. The act of creation was in both cases the revelation of a higher agent. Ignorant of his dependent grade, and thinking it was he who had of himself achieved the fabrication of the Universe, the Creator began to say, "I am God, and beside me there is no other." From Him also emanated souls, for He is the substance of souls, that is, in the sense in which soul is distinguished from spirit. "This is the meaning of the saying, 'And God made Man, taking clay from the earth, and breathed into his face the breath 'of life, and Man became a living soul,'" in which connection we should remember St. Paul's antithesis of the living soul and the quickening spirit. "This soul is, they say, the inner man, dwelling in the material body. And this material man is, according to them, as it were an inn or dwelling-place,<sup>2</sup> at one time of the soul alone, at another of the soul and dæmons, at another of the soul and words sown from above."<sup>3</sup> Man is thus a multiplex being; in him is a seed of the Divine, but mainly he is the product of ignorant activity—the work of a presumptuous Demiurgus.

The meaning of Nature.

To understand the real significance of the blundering Creator we must consider him as an impersonation of all that we gather up in the word Nature. Like some planet

<sup>1</sup> *De Migraticne Abrahami*, Mangey, iii. 426.

<sup>2</sup> πανδοχείον ἢ κατοικητήριον.

<sup>3</sup> *Hippolyti Refutatio*, Mangey, vi. c. 33, last sentence, and c. 24.  
282-284.

which, from different parts of our orbit, we may visualise in constellations severed by distances imagination fails to compute, Nature may be identified, according to our point of view, with either Good or Evil. Our own time associates it with all that is desirable, but for ages in the past it was a signpost towards the broad road leading to destruction. We must forget neither extreme if we would understand Gnosticism. When we turn towards the rich ferment which we thus approach we find a sort of prophecy of the course of thought which the mind of Christendom has followed from that day to this—a prophecy, not in the sense of anything that affords prevision of time relations, but of a contemporaneous admixture of elements which successive generations were to know successively. To oppose Nature is for modern feeling to oppose everything good, and yet the phrase “It is very natural” is generally used in a tone of apology. “One touch of Nature makes the whole world kin,” a dramatic expression of contempt for the human race,<sup>1</sup> is cited and remembered as if it were a witness to the universality of the purest human emotions. The misquotation—as such it must be recognised by all who compare any ordinary application of the phrase with its context—is an instructive illustration of what may be called the borderland character of our ideas of Nature. A step to the right, and we are secure on the domain of Good; a step to the left, and all slopes towards the abyss.

This varying colour, as it were, in our ideas of Nature, is reflected in these early views of Creation. To the Gnostics the impersonation of Nature as a principle of ignorant activity would seem to have relieved the Supreme Being from responsibility for the evil of the world. Yet this blundering Demiurgus is the son of Sophia—the Spirit of Wisdom—and it is to her

Duplicity  
in the  
Gnostic  
conception  
of the  
Author of  
Nature.

<sup>1</sup> The speech of Ulysses in Act III. Sc. iii., *Troilus and Cressida*

“One touch of Nature makes the whole world kin—  
That all, with one consent, praise new-born gauds  
And give to dust, that is a little gilt,  
More praise than gold o’er-dusted.”

revelation that he owes the knowledge, welcomed at once with awe and gladness, of the world above him. His presumptuous declaration, made in all sincerity—"I am God, and there is no other"—draws from her the warning—"Speak not falsely, for above thee is the Father of all, and not him alone."<sup>1</sup> For he is in truth divided from the Supreme Being by a genealogy of Emanations, of which Sophia is the last, and is thus inferior to others than the One Supreme. So far, by this mystic allegory, is the work of Creation divided from the sphere of the Divine.

The Fall of  
Sophia.

This Sophia is the one among this series of Emanations which the student of Gnosticism most needs to understand. For she is a fallen being, and it is in her fall that the blunder of Creation, as we may call it, takes its first start. We must, in following her history, bear in mind both conceptions of Wisdom contained in the Bible—the Wisdom of the Proverbs,<sup>2</sup> by which God made the world, and then that Wisdom so much dreaded by St. Paul,<sup>3</sup> by which Man knew not God. They appear sometimes in a dual form of her own personality, before and after her fall from the Cosmos of Divine to the Chaos of material existence. Or else these two conceptions are embodied more distinctly in the idea of a double Sophia, mother and daughter, of whom it is the last, born in the chaos and darkness, who gives birth to the Demiurgus. Her personality has wider affinities than any involved in the range of Hebrew thought; she is the female mourner whom we find in so many mythologies; we have met with her in those of Egypt, of India, of Greece. But we will here keep hold of the Hebrew clue, and take our start from the sublime passage in the Proverbs which expands the idea of Creative Wisdom into a companion of the Creator, the Divine Creator—an

<sup>1</sup> This is the account given by Irenæus, *contra Hæreses*, i. 30, 6, of the revelation given to Jaldabaoth, the Creator, who is identified with the God of the Jews. He was, according to some thinkers, an insupport of the prophets, but was led unawares to the choice, for this purpose, of men in whom is a seed of the spiritual life, and who stand, therefore, higher than himself.

<sup>2</sup> Prov. viii.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. i. 21.



impersonation illustrated by the genius of Michael Angelo,<sup>1</sup> and hymned for many generations in Scotch churches, where simple and perhaps harsh psalmody has been lifted, by precious recollections and profound reverence, into an atmosphere worthy of that association.

The Wisdom of the Proverbs may be regarded as the *creative* spirit. She is the author of witty inventions, riches and honour are with her, she can cause those who love her to inherit substance, and fill their treasures. But she is much more than this—"Counsel is mine, and effectual working . . . by me kings reign and princes decree justice." She is far older than the world—"I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning when there were no depths I was brought forth, when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth. While as yet He had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world. When He prepared the heavens, I was there: when He set a compass upon the face of the depth: when He established the clouds above: . . . when He gave to the sea His decree, that the waters should not pass His commandment: when He appointed the foundations of the earth: then I was by Him, as a master workman:<sup>2</sup> and I was daily His delight, rejoicing in His habitable earth; and my delights were with the sons of men." It is almost as if the Gnostic Sophia grew out of a distinct protest against Hebrew reverence for the Creator. The Wisdom manifest in Creation for the Gnostic was a spirit dating its very existence from a world of disorder, and inheriting a tradition of struggle and failure. Her history seems to repeat that of Eve, and to illuminate it

The double  
Tempta  
tion.

<sup>1</sup> Whose representation, in the Vatican, of the Creation of Man shows a Creator leaning on the neck of a female figure, while she lays a restraining hand upon him, and contemplates his work with awed misgiving.

<sup>2</sup> Prov. viii. 30 (so R V.); Greek ἀμύζουσα. A.V., "one brought up with him."

with lurid gleams unknown to the scenery of Eden. Or we may say, turning from the victorious to the defeated temptation, it is as if the Saviour had obeyed the injunction of the Tempter "Cast thyself down, for it is written, He shall give His Angels charge over thee." The sin, if sin it were, of the Gnostic Sophia, was that she did cast herself down,<sup>1</sup> allured by what we might fancy a materialised symbol of the Tempter's citation of the Psalm, a reflection of the Light above on the dark world of Chaos below. The plunge below was the consequence, and apparently the penalty, of an ambitious endeavour to rise upwards. It seems an innocent if not a praiseworthy aim to "gaze into the height, to see the light of the veil of the treasure of light" (and this was all her desire), but it stirred the envy and wrath of evil powers; by their diabolic contrivance, reflecting Heaven on the surface of Chaos, the brightness above is made to appear the brightness below, and Sophia sinks because she sought to soar. It is the same double view of Temptation as we find in Genesis in the successive falls of Man and of the Angels, the desire of Man to ascend and be as God, the desire of the Angels to descend and be as Man. These dual elements are found in different proportions in the different versions of the present myth, in that we now follow the aspiration, strongly marked in some versions, is faintly touched. A fine moral seems in-

<sup>1</sup> This is the form of the legend as it is given in the book *Pistis Sophia*, now accessible to the English reader in a deeply interesting volume published by Mr. Mead in 1906, at present out of print, and I hope soon to be republished. Among its many claims on attention is that of being the only specimen of Gnostic literature known to us at first hand; it is at least removed from the original merely by successive translations. Mr. Mead's is from a Latin translation of a Coptic MS. in the British Museum, this itself being evidently translated, not very skilfully, from the Greek of the author, whom Mr. Mead identifies with Valentinus, the chief Gnostic author and teacher. It does not appear to me always easy to fit in the details of the story here with other Valentinian allusions and narratives, but that perhaps is not surprising. It would be about as embarrassing, sometimes, to reconcile the different representations of the same character by the same author in different Greek plays. The pagination used in the following references is that of Mr. Mead's volume.

icated with an uncertain hand. The gaze, we seem taught, should never be bent towards the world of evil, even to follow the gleams of light which mirror deceitfully the world above.

"O light, in whom I have trusted"—thus Sophia makes her prayer in the chaotic darkness into which she has been led by her yearning after the light—"hear my repentance, and let my voice come into thy dwelling-place. They have taken away my light, and my power is dried up. I am become as a mere daemon dwelling in matter; I am become like the counterfeit of the spirit, which is in a material body, in which is no light-power. Thy commandment hath brought me below, and I am descended like a power of chaos, my power hath grown cold in me. But thou, Lord, art the light eternal, and thou dost visit them whom they"—i.e. the powers of darkness and chaos—"constrain, at all times. Now therefore, O light, arise, seek my power and the soul which is in me. Thy commandment is accomplished, which thou didst decree for me and mine afflictions. My time is come for thee to visit my power and my soul. At that time all the rulers of the material æons shall fear thy light. This, then, is that mystery which hath become the type for the race which shall be engendered; and the race which shall be engendered shall sing a song to the height, for the light hath regarded from the height of its light." "I have been set in the lower darkness, and in dead matter, in which there is no power. Thy spirit hath departed, and left me. Yet am I not utterly ruined, though my light is diminished in me. I have cried to the light with all the light that was in me, and I have stretched forth my hands unto thee."

The lament  
of Sophia

This prayer, expanded at great length in the Gnostic document from which it is taken, expresses the misery of a soul imprisoned in its material surroundings, and crushed beneath the perplexity of a withdrawal of the light due,

The horror  
of great  
darkness

apparently, to a too eager pursuit after it. The feeling is known to us best through the Prophets and Psalms of the Old Testament, which are continually recalled by the prayers of Sophia, and often quoted. But we feel ourselves in a universe unknown to Hebrew thought, a universe nearer the Zoroastrian conception of the light-world above, the chaotic darkness below. We must, to carry out this idea, consider it as a sort of black quagmire into which Sophia has sunk like a wounded bird; we must not inquire too carefully where the allegory ends and the cosmogony begins, but accept a sort of Dantesque universe as the natural framework of both conceptions. Welcome as is the recurrent shadow of our earth to weary limbs and eyes, darkness is still a natural symbol of evil, and while we follow the history of Sophia we may attain some imaginative sympathy with this horror of a darkness antithetic to God. If we say that human wisdom, seeking to comprehend the Absolute, sinks into more confusion, we may be using words which would not have suggested themselves to the Gnostics, but which assuredly convey some portion of the lesson of their rich and various allegory; and for us, perhaps, its chief portion.

The  
Unknown  
Saviour.

The deliverance of Sophia leads the reader of the allegory into a region of human and lifelike experience; we feel ourselves almost under the guidance of Bunyan. Her prayers and anguish call to her aid a Being difficult to name without misleading suggestions, for "Jesus," the companion who leads her upward, and the narrator of the whole, as a mysterious prologue to His human experience prefiguring His work of redemption to humanity, is not all to the Gnostic that He is to the Christian, however much He may appear to be so in this stage. "Sophia knew not that it was I who was bringing her help, and she did not recognise me at all,"<sup>1</sup> says the Lord to the disciples, recalling the words of St. John, "And he that

<sup>1</sup> *Pistis Sophia*, Mead, p. 83.



was healed knew not who it was." How much besides the Gnostic text does not that text from the Gospel illuminate! "She continued singing a song to the light of the treasure which she had seen of old and in which she had trusted, thinking it was the Light of Truth, and that it was because she had trusted in the light that she had been taken up in the chaos" (i.e. raised nearer to the light). But after the first deliverance and hope comes a time of bitter disappointment and apparent defeat. Sophia laments that "my brother, my consort, feared to help me, because of those among whom I have been set, and all the rulers of the height have regarded me as matter in which there is no light."<sup>1</sup> Her brother and consort is that very Saviour who, unrecognised by her, has drawn her from the depths of the abyss; it is indeed to her having at first quitted His escort and guardianship that her fall is owing. So at least she declares in one of her expressions of repentance; her fall has appeared fully accounted for before, but perhaps the confusion of sin is suitably represented by these gleams of varying attractiveness in the world of evil.

To understand the mystic web of Gnostic allegory, and at the same time the position of the Gnostics as from a Christian standpoint, we must dwell upon those passages in the Old Testament which represent the relation of Jehovah to Israel as an espousal: on those in the New which speak of the Church as the Bride of Christ. We must admit the idea of Sex as one transcending even its vast importance as a factor in human and animal life, we must consider its relation to new life as in the ancient sense of the word a *mystery*, implying and inculcating more than it explicitly conveys. The successive Emanations which separate the Supreme God from the Sophia are all pairs of male and female beings, whose connection seems to symbolise the plurality at the heart of all true unity. Profundity and

The  
Mystery  
of Sex

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 85.



Silence,<sup>1</sup> Intellect and Truth, Word and Life, Man and Church are obvious symbols of some spiritual correspondence; others are more perplexing, but more knowledge would probably reveal the allegory in all. The allusions to a marriage feast in our New Testament are illumined with new meaning when we turn to them from studying these "syzigies," as they are called—the successive pairs of Emanation, male and female, which bridge the interval between God and the Creation. Even the Supreme was "no lover of solitariness."<sup>2</sup> For he was all love, but love is not love if there be nothing to be loved." In those words surely lies the conception of something that we can only figure to ourselves as *eternal comradeship*. The transition from Polytheism to Monotheism—a transition which was not entirely conterminous with the domain of Christianity—must have aroused some questioning, Was then the Eternity beyond Creation occupied by a solitary Being? and the answer, which prepared the way for all the speculations and dogmas of orthodox Christianity, also moulded the systems which we know as the first heresies.

The temptation to be as God.

In other expositions of the history of Sophia the sin to which her fall is owing is given as a presumptuous attempt to create alone, without the aid of any comrade; she, in fact, seems confused with her son the Demiurgus, the only difference being that she seeks consciously to imitate the Supreme Being of whom the Demiurgus is ignorant, and thus "seeks to be as God" in a different sense. "She longed to imitate the Father and create by herself without her consort, and so achieve a work in nothing inferior to the Father, in ignorance that it is the Increate alone, the absolute Cause and Root, who has this power. Sophia therefore emanated the only thing she could, namely, a formless essence. And

<sup>1</sup> Irenæus, ii. ; Matter, *Hist. Critique du Gnosticisme*, ii. 53, 2nd ed.

<sup>2</sup> φιλέρημος οὐκ ἦν. Ἀγάπη γὰρ, φησὶν, ἦν ὁλος, ἡ δὲ ἀγάπη οὐκ ἔστιν ἀγάπη, εἰ μὴ ἡ τὸ ἀγαπώμενον.—*Hippolyti Refutatio*, &c. vi. 29 (Duncker and Schneidewin, 272).

this is the meaning of the words of Moses, 'The earth was invisible and unwrought.' . . . And all the Æons betook themselves to praying the Father to put an end to Sophia's grieving, for she was bewailing and groaning because of the abortion which she had produced by herself. And so the Father, taking pity on her tears, gave orders for an additional Emanation—Christ and the Holy Spirit."<sup>1</sup> By them this formless abortion is eliminated from the realm of Spirit the Pleroma, as it is called and Sophia is restored to peace and tranquillity. But she too is ejected from the Pleroma. She becomes now the lower Sophia, who, in other accounts, is represented as her own daughter; and from her proceeds the ignorant Creator, ignorant even of his own Mother, who is herself a fallen being. Yet it is from her he receives the information of his own subordinate place, and the many grades of being which separated him from the Supreme. The idea of Sophia is a wider one than anything confined to this semi-Christian mythology; she is a sister of Demeter, of Isis; but if we would understand her significance, we must connect her with the warning, "By that sin fell the Angels," and regard her as in some sense a reflection of Satan.

The system we have hitherto followed is that of Valen-  
tinus, the chief Gnostic teacher, but we will now turn to one  
who will be more interesting to some readers, who must be  
felt by all to take his place among the most spiritual of  
the world's teachers. "There was a time," says Basilides,  
"when nought was, absolutely not even the One." He does  
not mean that there ever was a time when God began to exist,  
but that we can only conceive of Him by thinking away all  
limitations, even such as are necessary for the use of language.  
To Basilides, as to the Indian, God could be expressed only  
by No, no. "The names [we use] are not sufficient even

The  
Hidden  
God.

<sup>1</sup> *Hippolyti Refutatio*, &c. vi. 30, Duncker, p. 274

<sup>2</sup> *Hippolyti Refutatio*, &c. vii. 21 seq; *Ibid.*, p. 358

for the [manifested] universe, much less then can we find expression for the world of Invisible Reality." And even beyond that world lies one not only invisible to our eyes, but inconceivable to our minds: one of necessity yet more remote from any connection with language, and hence, for those to whom Language is conterminous with Reality, an empty dream, while it is the focus of reality to "him who knows"—the Gnostic. It is to this highest region we must ascend in thought if we would approach the Divine. We must quit the Visible, we must enter a realm where Sense is silent, where the eye, the ear, and the touch find no material, where Thought only is active. And then again we must pursue our journey further; we must leave Thought behind as we have left Sense, we must approach a world which is, for our faculties, a blank. In the beginning "Nought was for which man has ever found a name." We should apparently name it least misleadingly (but this is not the expression of Basilides) if we speak of it as the realm of Cause. For here it was that all Being had its origin, "the Deity beyond Being, without thinking or feeling or choosing or desiring, willed to create Universality." It was "not our dimensional and differentiable universe which subsequently came into existence, but the Seed of all universes." "This universal Seed contained everything in itself, in some such fashion as the grain of mustard seed contains root, stem, branches, leaves," and the whole species in potentiality. But Basilides hastens to protest against the notion that he is propounding a scheme of mere Evolution. God did not make the universe "as a spider weaves its web," rather "He spake and it was, and this is the meaning of the saying of Moses, 'Let there be light, and there was light.' The Seed of the universe, the word that was spoken, 'Let there be light, and there was light,' was from the state beyond being." No other Gnostic, so far as we know, came so near the Christian doctrine of Creation.

Basilides, we see, reads the first chapter of Genesis as a true Jew; for him the Universe originates in no blind necessity, but in the decision of a Mind. But here too he speaks as a Gnostic, as one who knows the hidden truth beyond the appearance—beyond even the revelation to Faith; and here we see the great idea of Evolution returns, on a grander scale and with a more mystic scope. That revelation was entire truth, as far as it went. “‘He spake and it was,’ this is the meaning of the saying of Moses, ‘Let there be light, and there was light.’” Not merely the light which illumines the eye of the body; the creative act originates a spiritual as well as a material universe. For “‘This is what was spoken in the Gospel, ‘It was the true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.’” The reader of Genesis, the reader of St. John, knows aright both the beginning and the end of Creation. But to the Gnostic is revealed the vast intermediate stages, which Basilides proceeds to explore, but in which his modern reader follows him with halting steps and often loses sight of him altogether. We will endeavour rather to meet him at his goal than to track him throughout his journey, and note only that between this primal act of Supreme Will, calling into existence the potentialities of all existence, and the act which moulded our visible universe we must imagine a vast growth in the invisible universe also. The Supreme has breathed into this world of potential existence “a seed of triple sonship,” that is, we may venture to expand the words, a graduated principle of relationship to Himself. He has called into existence a world where one element is not a mere result of creative activity, but a trace of some more intimate connection with the Divine. The Creator of our world, the Demiurgus, himself merely an outgrowth from the universal Seed, calls into existence a Son, and thereby develops this seed of sonship unconsciously to himself, so that the Divine Son becomes the means of revealing to his father the existence of the

Revelation  
to the  
Creator

Supreme God, previously unknown to him and ignored in his proclamation, "I am God and there is none beside me." Redemption begins with this revelation. This Gospel of a Supreme Deity above the Creator is the "wisdom declared in a mystery" of St. Paul. This in fact is the Gnosis as it exists in the spiritual world. It is the revelation to the Divine Artist, through his work, and still more through his Fatherhood, of a Power above his own, an unknown Inspirer, who has provided his material, and influenced his activity. Surely one of the most pregnant ideas that have ever flitted before the mind of a dreamer and thinker!

The Seed  
of Sonship.

Redemption, as represented here, is no mere incident of human life. It has its place in the Divine world. Repentance, we are told, is an experience of the Creator. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" was interpreted,<sup>1</sup> somewhat strangely, as denoting the awe felt by the Creator at this discovery of an unknown God. "For he," i.e. the Creator, "began to grow wise through the instruction of the Christ sitting beside him, learning what is That beyond being, what the Sonship, what the Holy Spirit, what the apparatus of the universe, and what the manner of its restoration." Already the Universe needed restoration! Already there was confession of sin. Our world took its start from such a basis. The mistake of the Creator, in supposing himself the Supreme God, however innocent it may appear, must in some sense have partaken of the nature of sin; it must have been an approach, however remote, towards the rebellion of Satan. The attitude of independence, where dependence is due, is here presented as the root of all evil; and a world formed under the influence of such a delusion was a world tainted at its source. But if the Fall was coeval with the Creation, so was the work of the Redeemer.

<sup>1</sup> Hippolytus, vii. 26; Daubner, p. 372. The Demiurgus was not aware that he was copying anything higher than himself



Redemption began with Creation, and is a continuous work, existing through all the ages. The seed of Sonship, infused by the Highest into that world of potentiality which he called into being, spoken of here as the "formlessness," is not exhausted by the Divine Son who reveals that Supreme Sower; in part it still remains in the undeveloped sources of existence. That "the Creation itself groaneth and travaileth together, waiting for the manifestation of the Sons of God," must be understood with reference to this hidden Sonship awaiting its emergence in the true spiritual men, of whom Jesus is the type and crown. He had come and vanished when St. Paul wrote those words, and we must suppose the yearning of the Creation still to await its satisfaction, although for the most part the language of Basilides refers to the past. "When the time had come for the revelation of the Sons of God, who are ourselves, for whom the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in expectation, the Gospel"—or, as we may translate it, the Gnosis—"came into the universe and passed through every principality and authority and lordship, and every title that man can use. It came of very truth, not that anything came *down* from above, or that the blessed Sonship departed from that blessed God beyond being, who transcends all thought. Nay, but just as the vapour of naphtha may catch fire from a vapour a long way off from the naphtha, so do the powers of man's spirit pass from below from the formlessness of the conglomeration up to the Sonship." That is to say, the Divine spark in Humanity at the coming of Revelation recognises its true kinship and bursts into flame. The Sons of God are manifested to the yearning eyes of the travailing Creation, and the world of Spirit is redeemed.

If we try to sum up the moral ideas in this mystic Gospel (and we do not here seek to investigate any other than its moral ideas), we may say that it presents, as a sufficient answer to the problem of human existence, the

The Revelation of the Sons of God.

fact of Redemption. The idea in our modern Christian world has become commonplace; we are at least familiar with it in many forms, and have come to discover all its logical weakness. It seems to grow in meaning as we contemplate it at its source. The world, Basilides thought, is *being* redeemed. The whole course of history is a process of Redemption, and this process is a justification of the world's existence, even with all its evil.

The Limits  
of Re-  
demption.

When we come to recognise the limits of what Basilides meant by Redemption, we may find it unsatisfactory, for he is not contemplating a Gospel for every human being. Quite the contrary, it is a Gospel only for spiritual men, and all others are to drink of some mystic Lethe which shall for ever quench their yearning for the order above them, "so that the lower souls may not suffer pain by striving after impossible objects." A dreary Gospel for one whose aspirations are for humanity! But for one regarding all things, human and divine, through the aristocratic atmosphere of antiquity, a benevolent and humane prospect for the aliens of the City of God. They would know nothing of the blessedness of the Sons of God. But they would desire those blessings as little "as fish desire to feed on the mountains with sheep."<sup>1</sup> Compare this tranquil unyearning content with the Hell which was to supersede it? Surely such a comparison shows that something was lost to Christianity when the Gnostics were pronounced heretics.

Pain trans-  
figured.

If we could think that Dante had ever read the fragments which the Christian Fathers have preserved in their refutation of Gnosticism, we might imagine that much of his Purgatory was suggested by Basilides. The sense of suffering indissolubly united with hope, of pain with purification, seems more innate in the mind of the Gnostic teacher than even in that of the Christian poet, for Dante imagined a pain that was not purifying, and to Basilides such a con-

<sup>1</sup> *Hippolyti Refutatio*, &c. vii. 27; Daneker, p. 376.

ception seems to have been impossible. The joy with which Dante describes the souls in Purgatory as welcoming the cleansing pangs of suffering should be, Basilides thought, the animating feeling of all who suffered, even of those who from the world's point of view seemed to suffer unjustly. The world is our Purgatory, and all pain is a heavenly promise. The most perplexing dispensation of earthly events is to be explained really by the need of purification visible only to God, who can inflict pain on no soul which He does not seek to elevate and purify. The sufferings of the world were a proof of redeeming energy, for they could have no other meaning under the dominion of God. Pain, Basilides<sup>1</sup> thought, should be as welcome to sinners, *must* be as welcome to sinners, as the surgeon's knife to sufferers from a diseased limb. And this he felt not as people feel it who preach sermons or listen to them, but as the sufferer from a mortifying limb, feeling it an actual, piercing need on the one hand, a practical influence of delivery on the other. He seems to have heard objections on all sides, but not to have deeply considered any. Infants suffer, and infants must be innocent. Yes, innocent of sinful acts, but not of that tendency towards sin of which suffering is the medicine. Many men, equally guiltless with infants as far as actions go, have within them that root of sin which shoots downward through the Will, of such must we reckon even Jesus of Nazareth, "For I will say anything rather than allow that Providence is evil."

The man who made that declaration must have felt that the world sometimes suggested the idea of an evil author, The final spirit he must have confronted its dark aspects, and seen beyond them to a mystic world of hope, unattainable to the mere intellect. He must have held firmly to the belief, so much obscured by the subsequent dogmatic system of the Church, that the deepest certainty is moral certainty; that far beneath the discernment of the senses and the inferences of the under-

<sup>1</sup> Mead, Clemens Alexandrinus, *Stromata*, iv 12

standing lie those profound convictions which rival the first in their immediate certainty, and the last in their independence of all that is material. This surely is the meaning of the "seed of Sonship" in the primal chaos which the Creator uses unawares, which becomes to him the source of revelation. This too must be the meaning of an obscure passage included in the extracts from which our account is taken, to the effect that the Sonship within the primeval chaos finds wings to soar upward, "and those wings are the Holy Spirit." All holiness—so we would expand or unravel the thought—is connected with a filial attitude of mind. The righteousness of Man is a recognition of his relation to a Father.

The Many  
and One  
in Man.

We may perhaps welcome as a practical illustration of this Gnostic ideal of Fatherhood, the fact that the son of Basilides, Isidore, appears to have been one of his best interpreters. As the father had surmised a multiplicity within the Divine Nature, so the son proceeded to recognise a similar multiplicity in Man himself. Man, in this sense, is made in the image of God. And in the same way the true self is a Unity. The Basilidians, we are told by their orthodox opponents,<sup>1</sup> are accustomed to give the name of appendages to the passions. These essences, they say, have a certain substantial existence, and are attached to the rational soul owing to a certain turmoil and primitive confusion. On to this nucleus other alien natures of the essence grow, such as those of the wolf, ape, lion, goat, &c. And when the peculiar qualities of such natures appear round the soul they cause the desires of the soul to become like the special natures of those animals. But, comments Isidore, we must remember that these appendages, however close to the soul, are still distinct from it. "It was the man himself who led his desire towards evil, and refused to battle with the constraint of the appendages. Our duty is to show ourselves rulers over the inferior creation

<sup>1</sup> Clemens Alexandrinus, *Stromata*, ii. 20.



within us." Man's moral freedom, for the son of Basilides as for Kant, is assured by the fact of duty; the fact itself needed no demonstration. As a man is bound to submit to what is higher than himself, so he is bound to rule over what is lower. He is called upon to an imperial no less than to a submissive attitude. He has not only to obey God, but to imitate Him.

We seem here to meet, in a spiritualised form, with modern ideas of Evolution. The lower stages of man's development are commemorated in his temptations, and he is called on to complete his emancipation and assert his prerogative. "The inferior creation within us" remains as a subordinate neighbourhood, as it were, which it is our spiritual exercise to keep in subjection. Clement repeats the idea from the fragments of Valentinus. The heart of man, he says, can become pure only by the expulsion of those spirits who enter it as travellers an inn, defiling and injuring that which is not their own, and in which therefore they take no interest. "When the Father, who alone is good, claims it as his possession, it becomes sanctified and illuminated, and in such a heart is realised the blessing on the pure, that they shall see God." Here again the Father claims what in the world of the Creator is confused with alien material. The Highest is known always as the Redeemer. This too is the work of spiritual men, of whom Jesus must be regarded as the type, and who are addressed in language which for Christian ears is true only of Him. "You, being immortal, have voluntarily accepted Death, in order that you might swallow up and destroy it, so that in and through you Death might die."<sup>1</sup> In what sense was it open to these spiritual men not to die? We have but this fragment from a Valentinian homily reported by Clement of Alexandria; we can form no conjecture as to the possible events which the Gnostic teacher thought these Sons of God might have chosen to prevent or bring

Refuge  
with the  
Eternal  
Unity.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* iv. 13.



about. We can only discern that he regarded the work of Christ as the work of every spiritual man, that in some sense all such were called on to yield up their lives for their brethren. Perhaps it was to be a pre-natal choice—perhaps the consent to be born was the primal sacrifice. Or perhaps Death is here contemplated rather as a spiritual experience than as a separation of body and soul, and we must consider it rather as a close approach to and vivid apprehension of the world's evil, so that in this sense the true Gnostic must "taste death for every man." At any rate sacrifice is accepted as the Law of the Highest.

Power  
divorced  
from  
Knowledge  
the Source  
of Evil.

If we seek to gather up in a single expression the ideas common to the various schools of Gnostics, we might set it forth in the statement that they all traced the existence of Evil to an exercise of transcendent Power, divorced from transcendent Knowledge—the lower, ignorant of the higher, engaging in responsibilities which demand a sense of dependence. The sin of ignorant presumption may seem an inadequate explanation of the misery of the world. Yet it is an explanation justified by much experience of life; as far as our vision extends within the range of this mortal sphere, it is in many respects more important to know accurately than to feel rightly. None who believe in Divine justice can accept this as an ultimate verdict on human effort. But here and now it is an unquestionable summary of human experience, and a warning of supreme urgency in its bearing on human conduct. When we come to realise the vast influence for evil that lies in ignorant activity, indeed, we shall perhaps be surprised, not that this explanation of Evil ever existed, but that it was so much forgotten. It would appear the only possible explanation till Man renounces the attempt to be as God, knowing Good and Evil.

Gnostic  
theosophy  
made  
plausible

The Roman world in the first ages of Christianity gave a combination of the One and the Many similar to that which the Gnostics imagined for the Divine world; and

the mind of the age was thus satisfied with such a harmony between its inward and outward circumstances as men constantly mistake for an explanation of both. Cæsar was guiltless of much that his ministers imposed on their people. As a matter of fact, the worst subordinate might be a ruler preferable to Cæsar; but when we see how St. Paul could speak of the dominion of Nero,<sup>1</sup> we must feel that oneness of rule is an ideal which cannot be dissociated from beneficence even by the follies and crimes of the worst of mankind. And although to us it is evident that if Cæsar had been omnipotent he would have been guilty of all that was performed by his agents, this inference did not trouble the contemporaries of the Gnostics. Men are slow to perceive an ultimate difficulty. They state their perplexities in many various forms before they perceive that they are taking a paraphrase for an answer. They build up long series of the explanations that move a difficulty one step backwards before they discover that this retrogression has left the original difficulty undiminished. And long phases of the life of thought are sometimes occupied with this translation of some problem into another dialect, under the belief that it has thus found its solution.

The secret of the power of Gnosticism must be sought in the deep instinct which welcomes any teaching implying, as Gnosticism did, that man's existence in this world is by itself inexplicable. Whenever any form of religion has helped to the satisfaction of that craving which seeks to be assured of the existence of the Unknown, representing the life of this world as a fragment, there Hope finds room to grow. No other promise so stirs our human nature as that of *Redemption*. That pain is sent and wrong permitted in order to teach the blessing of healing and of forgiveness, is no answer to the question why the Almighty could not give the good without the ill. But the discovery that some kinds of blessedness are linked with evil provides a dynamic

by an  
a total  
pattern  
before  
men's eye

and wel  
come by  
an inspir-  
ing Hope.

<sup>1</sup> Romans xiii. 1-8

impulse in dealing with the evils of the world. Those can strive against them best who see some meaning in them. The paradox to logic is a victory for life, and as man seeks to be a Redeemer, he ceases to ask why the world needs redemption. This is a truth for every age, and in a certain sense and in a certain degree it comes fresh to every age. But it came home to the age in which Christianity was born with a force which it could possess for none later. To that age Redemption was a new idea. The world penetrated by Greek thought knew it not. We, looking back on eighteen hundred years during which men have professed to believe it, and to some extent have acted on it, must confess that any such embodiment of this ideal as this world presents is disappointing; its influence on character has not given all it seemed to promise, or after eighteen Christian centuries man would not be what he is. But it arose to the contemporaries of the Gnostics as a new hope and kindled dreams of a Heaven upon earth. There will be a time, says the chief speaker in a dialogue embodying Gnostic tendencies,<sup>1</sup> when those who oppose themselves to "that great and holy Will," shall discover that they have resisted it not in strength, but in weakness and error; when the evil of this world shall be brought to an end, the purpose of purification for which it was created being fulfilled. "And at the establishment of that new world all evil motions will cease, and all rebellions will be brought to an end, and the foolish will be persuaded, and deficiencies will be filled up, and there will be peace and safety by the gift of Him who is Lord of all Natures." Evil, thus nearing its term, may remain as a logical problem, but emptied of moral urgency it leaves room for the instincts of the heart and the hopes of the spiritual imagination.

<sup>1</sup> *Book of the Laws of Countries*, Cureton. *Spicilegium Syriacum*. Bardesanes appears in it as the chief speaker, and has been supposed the author.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE FALL OF MAN

GNOSTICISM must thus be regarded as an imperfect Dualism. God is there discerned as the Fountain of Unity, and Spirit bears the impress of that oneness which is complete alone in Him. His complete antithesis is the world of dead Matter, in which Unity is impossible, the world of mere Multiplicity, of confusion opposite to God. But in the midst is the intermediate world of physical life which we know as Nature, with its divine but ignorant Creator, and this intermediate region, to be associated with either good or evil according to the point of view, comprises the whole stage of mortal experience. The antithesis of Spirit (as Good) and Matter (as Evil) is thrown into the background by this introduction of a spiritual being whose activity has been productive of Evil, but whose intentions were good. Ignorant activity dealing with Evil is enough, as we see daily, to account for any extension of Evil, and the blundering Demiurgus of the Gnostics was in their belief the actual cause of the evil of the world; but as an emanation from the Divine Spirit he could not represent Ahriman. Their speculations passed naturally into a more complete development, the name of which, and the name only, is more familiar to most people. Manichæism had the distinction of first attracting the adherence and then awakening the opposition of the great Augustine, and through its double influence on him it has influenced the whole development of European religion, and, we may add, of irreligion. Such a view claims the attention of all who would understand the moral life of humanity.

The incomplete Dualism passes into the complete.

The new hope, and vast disappointment of Humanity.

This more complete form of Dualism was a natural result of the condition of the world at the establishment of Christianity. No hope ever known to our race can have equalled that which was then roused, stimulated, and profoundly disappointed. The misery, the baffling tumult of the last hours of Paganism must have formed to the eyes of Christians a black background, against which they were at last to behold the image of triumphant righteousness. The Church was to rule the world; the reign of disorder and cruelty must be past for ever. The hope must have been felt, to some extent, even beyond the region we now recognise as Christendom. The rise of Christianity coincides with a revival which stands alone in the history of religion as a real and permanent resurrection of an ancient faith<sup>1</sup>—that of Zoroastrianism. About the same time as the Emperor Alexander Severus marked the progress of Christianity by according a place in his private chapel to a statue of Christ, a synod was summoned by the new monarch of Persia to reintroduce the ancient Persian religion, banished for five centuries, and the Zoroastrian scriptures subsequent to this revival are, as we have seen,<sup>2</sup> among the most serious and deeply religious of all that remain. Thus the Eastern and Western half of the civilised world, as it was known by the classic races, seemed alike on the verge of a new age. But the period which actually followed proved one when the only refuge from despair was the belief that the Kingdom of Darkness included the whole domain of mortal existence, and that what was seen and experienced here was but the prelude to the true life of humanity.

The problem of Redemption then and now.

This vast disappointment, as far as the world has yet gone, must be a permanent shadow of Christianity for those

<sup>1</sup> Gibbon, vol. i. ch. 8. The revolution by which the Persian rule and religion were restored took place 226 A.D., and the last touches were given to the Persian scriptures shortly after the Council of Nice.

<sup>2</sup> See above, p. 132.



who both think and feel. But in our time the calamities of life have been in some sense transfigured by the new direction given to human sympathy towards all calamity. The idea of Redemption has taken up its abode among us as a yearning and a promise, and its persistence and growth as a motive partly hides and partly justifies its absence as a fact. Every generous spirit in our time is of necessity a Redeemer. To rescue some part of this world from some part of its misery is so much the accepted aim of all good men, we may say of all but bad men, that we are apt to imagine this the human aim at all times, thus losing the sense of its originality at a particular point in history, and the shock of its apparent defeat. And then again the idea of Evolution has come in to blend with it, like a lamp lighted before a sunset glow has faded. The two ideas may be now said equally to form elements in the orthodox creed, and seem to many, no doubt, two views of one reality. We feel that both Creation and Redemption are processes, going on before our eyes or within our spirits, and that every man is called on to co-operate in the work initiated by the Son of Man. Such a co-operation answers no question as to the responsibility of Omnipotence for Evil, but it removes the desire to ask it. Ages of disappointing experience have modified hope; colossal disasters have had so often to be recognised by the side of beliefs to which they give the lie, that their long tradition of coincidence has come to be recognised as a fact apart from any harmonising explanation; with illogical minds, always largely the majority, it has been actually mistaken for such an explanation. We must forget both what is valid and what is fallacious in these assumptions in order to understand the perplexities of the age of Augustine.<sup>1</sup> We must see the blackness of a perishing

<sup>1</sup> His life fills the seventy six years from A.D. 354 onwards. Christianity had been the religion of the Empire, at his birth, for twenty-nine years.

world against the brightness of a sunrise if we would appreciate the colossal dismay of those who accepted the Manichæan explanation of Evil. They did not, it is true, feel the woes of the world as we do. The pain of some was not in antiquity, or for long afterwards, the pain of all. If here and there in the ancient world some feeling for those whom we should now call "the masses" darkened the speculations of thinkers, such a shadow has left no trace in literature. But while the problem of evil was lightened by this limitation of sympathy, such clue as we possess to a practical solution—to one, that is, which satisfies the heart—was lost. Redemption, to the early Church, was an accomplished work; it only remained to take advantage of it. The hope roused by the Roman Empire had kindled a vivid and glowing anticipation. What must have been the hope roused by a Christian Empire? Probably something that could in no case find its realisation on this earth. But the welter of bloodshed and crime actually meeting those anticipations gave them a sharper contrast than can be discerned in any other period of civilised life.

The Mani-  
chæan  
solution.

It was under the influence of this crushing and all-pervading disappointment that an Eastern religion claiming to be a form of Christianity and transferring all hope of Redemption to some other sphere than this world, found large acceptance in the newly Christianised Empire, and became the rival of the Catholic faith. Mani, or Manichæus, a Persian of noble family, and the founder of this religion, was crucified by Bahram I. in the year 276 A.D. He describes himself, in almost the only authenticated utterance we have from him,<sup>1</sup> as "Mani, called to be an apostle

<sup>1</sup> It is quoted by Augustine *contra Epistolam Fundamenti*, c. 5, 13. The source of the account which follows is mainly the translation of an Oriental fragment, the *Fihrist*, by Gustav Flügel, the work of a Moham-medan at Bagdad, written in 987 A.D., but from much older sources, and Beausobre, *Hist. Critique de Manichée*, a product of vast learning and a genial sympathy very refreshing after the bitter antagonism of the Christian Fathers.

of Jesus Christ, through the election of God the Father," and what follows this description might form a part of any Christian profession of belief. "Over the Kingdom of Light," he goes on in the exposition of his doctrine, "ruled God the Father, glorious in His might, truthful by His very essence, ever blessed in His own everlasting Being. . . . His resplendent realms are founded on the blessed earth of light in such wise that no power exists by which they could ever be destroyed or shaken," words hard to reconcile with the rest of a theory suggesting that the Kingdom of Darkness supplied a dangerous rivalry to the Kingdom of Light, but embodying no greater inconsistency than any other attempt to harmonise the conception of God and Evil. The ultimate triumph of the kingdom of light was always kept clear, but here and now, it seemed, the sovereign power was of darkness, and by here and now we must understand the whole visible universe and the whole age of its duration. The worlds of Good and of Evil, existent from eternity, were at first entirely separate, their inhabitants being mutually ignorant of any different region. But some movement in the realm of darkness brought its inhabitants near the limits of the race of light, and with what is surely a strange inconsistency for is not the desire of good itself good?—they were filled with a desire to possess this new world suddenly made known to them. In the conflict which ensued Light, or Spirit, was somehow mixed with Darkness, or Matter—it was, says the grotesque allegory, swallowed by the evil race, and the "primal man," called into existence to do battle with these hosts of darkness, suffered a temporary defeat, and was detained in this lower region till delivered by the intervention of a higher Being, the "Living Spirit," or the "Friend of Light." Through this mysterious warfare of the powers of Good and Evil a seed of the higher life had fallen into the dark world of Matter, and Creation is an apparatus for repairing

this calamity and recovering the treasure robbed by the evil powers; creative energy is a kind of ransom paid by the world of Spirit to the world of Matter, and marks an episodic confusion in the eternity of distinct Dualism from which this mixed world began and to which it is destined to return.

Nature is  
the struggle  
of Spirit to  
enfranchise  
itself from  
Matter.

The Creation, according to this view, is here, as in Gnostic theory, and, we may add, as in *Paradise Lost*, the result of the Fall. The world of Spirit was uncontaminated by any contact with the world of Matter at the beginning of the scheme which we call Nature, and shall be so again at its end. Nature is the ceaseless martyrdom of soul, but its martyrdom is its deliverance. Every seed that breaks from the bosom of the dark Earth is an expression of the yearning after escape that pervades the whole world of growth; the last sigh of the dying is the consummation. The drama of Redemption is represented in a parable which reaches us through the citation of scornful opponents, but even so does not wholly lose its poetry. The waxing of the Moon painted to the Manichæans the gradual filling of a bark with the souls of the departed, the ascent being made by the Pillar of Light, by which some understand the Milky Way, and others the Zodiac, as a kind of Egyptian water-wheel. When the Moon's load was full she bore them to the Sun; these stages of the departure from the dark world being stages of purification—in the Moon by water, in the Sun by fire; and this gradual transference of the heavenly freight to the region of light repairing the original confusion of Matter and Spirit.<sup>1</sup> When at last this, the last particle of Soul, is disentangled from the dark world into which it has fallen, a vast conflagration is to burst forth, which will consume this universe, now a mere husk from which

<sup>1</sup> Some idea of this kind must have been widely spread through the East, for it is suggested by more than one passage in the Upanishads. Mani had travelled in India.

the fruit has been extracted. It endures only as a medium between the dark world of Matter and the bright world of Spirit; when a medium is no longer needed it is to be destroyed as useless lumber. The Creation is a necessary misfortune; it is, to use the metaphor of an orthodox opponent, as it were the amputation of a limb—a disastrous measure taken only to avert a still greater disaster. The final conflagration is to be the reversal of the original confusion of Good and Evil. Life, as we see it here, may be regarded as the hostage from a Divine race, held by its deadly foe and ransomed at the price of all this organisation given to the material universe which we know as Nature.

This view is one obviously originating in a time of profound despondency and disappointment. It teaches that all a man can see and touch is tainted with evil. Evolution—for the word may be used here as appropriately as anywhere—is the gradual separation of the imprisoned Spirit within the material realm. Nature, as including something of both, is this evolution, but the Gnostic Demiurgus has disappeared and no mighty personality appears to intervene between the rulers of the kingdom of Light and Darkness. Once more the world of Ormazd and Ahriman emerges into prominence, but it is the dark hemisphere within which speculation now seems imprisoned. The evils of the world seem to concentrate themselves, the whole tone of thought is confused, it seems to lose its coherence, to partake literally in the principle of Darkness. Something of this may be owing to the medium through which Manichæism reaches us, for we know it only by orthodox refutation. But that, we have seen, is equally true of Gnosticism; any difference in this respect must be due to the quality of the two systems themselves. Manichæism appears a less significant form of speculation than that we have just been considering, or rather it is the least attractive division of that group of speculations. But its distinction of having attracted one mighty anta-

This scheme a large influence in Christianity



gonist, whom it may boast of having overcome in spirit while it was trampled underfoot by him as a pestilent heresy, has brought it into greater prominence than any other. Augustine was first an adherent<sup>1</sup> and then a fierce enemy of Manichæism, and in him are gathered up those tendencies both of direct influence and of modern reaction which it has left permanently stamped upon Christianity. The Persian heresiarch is an indistinct figure, despite his halo of martyrdom. We see him only by the reflected light which he borrows from the great Christian Doctor, through whose genius his system has influenced the world.

The  
contrast  
with the  
Persian  
Dualism.

A religion depending on the antithesis of light and darkness seems most intelligible when we connect it with Persia, but no two systems can present a stronger moral contrast than Zoroastrianism and Manichæism. In place of the energetic spirit of that early belief which gives honour to industry, which reverences marriage, which stirs everywhere a hopeful activity, we have a timid quietism, a superstitious reverence for all lower forms of life, a dread of all that tends to new life. A new birth is regarded as a misfortune; death commemorates the escape of Spirit from the chains of Matter. The ideal life, therefore, must hold itself aloof from marriage; all that tends towards the act by which Man sanctions and perpetuates the indwelling of Spirit in Matter is Evil. We feel, when we compare the early and late Dualism, that between the dawn of the Persian faith and the attempt of Mani to harmonise it with Christianity a world has come and gone. Zoroastrianism arose in the fresh youth of the world. Manichæism was the product of an age of disappointment. It was Zoroastrianism remodelled as an answer to the question, Whence comes Evil? The early religion aimed, no doubt, at supplying an answer to that question, but its whole spirit was opposed to anything which emphasises the problem. It was the conflict with, not the

<sup>1</sup> From 374 to 383 A.D.

explanation of, Evil which animated Zoroastrianism. But Manichæism arose in a world overshadowed by the problem, and the struggle of Christianity with Manichæism was recorded partly by an acceptance, and partly by a vehement rejection of the Manichæan solution, both these influences being mirrored in the great mind of the Christian Doctor and the system which his genius, for many ages, imposed on the world.

Never, in the history of the world, can the Manichæan theory have been at a greater advantage than in the fourth century of our era, in the middle of which Augustine's life began. All large and lofty hope was eclipsed. We may allow ourselves to believe that no generation wholly lacks the blessedness of affections which

The age of  
darkness.

"made earth amends  
With parents, brothers, children, friends."

But in this age such affections lost all inspiring sanction; they felt the blight of the second-best. The best life, it was believed, was in the cloister. Public life opened no vista. A tempest of barbaric invasion raged around the whole civilised world, and the domain of order and civilisation, within which should have been found a firm union sinking all divisions for the common good, was honeycombed by corruption and emptied of all courageous patriotism, while it was also torn by passionate party spirit, calling itself religion. The Church mirrored the confusion, the disaster, the corruption of the State. No more dreary page of history hurries the reader than that which is occupied by the first schism—the chapter of Donatist controversy.<sup>1</sup> It was a

<sup>1</sup> The original accusation which was the cause of this schism was that, brought against the Catholic party by their opponents, of having delivered up the Christian scriptures under dread of persecution. This of course was previous to the establishment of Christianity, but the controversy took its bitterest form subsequently in an attack on a bishop whose ordination was said to be rendered void by this guilt on the part of the person at whose hands he received it.

faction fight, not a heresy—a struggle between two parties whose convictions were identical, but who killed and tortured each other in mere party hatred. If we turn to the individual life which should most have shown forth the influence of Christianity we are unable to contradict Gibbon when he tells us that the first Christian Emperor “advanced at once in the knowledge of truth and the practice of crime.”<sup>1</sup> The malignant epigram must be accepted as a sober historic statement; the conversion of Constantine seemed to transform a wise statesman and kind kinsman to a bloodthirsty tyrant. A few years after he opened the council which fixed the faith of Christendom with a heartfelt appeal for union, this first Christian king “laid aside the tenderness of a father without assuming the equity of a judge,”<sup>1</sup> murdered a son whose only crime was his place in the popular favour, a nephew to reach whose blameless life he had to reject the prayers of his favourite sister; and lastly, with more excuse, the wife to whose jealousy or guilty love of her stepson the initial murder is said to be owing. These horrors were the herald of a much wider massacre, perpetrated by his son and instigated by the forgery of a Christian bishop, in which the whole large family of Constantine perished except his three sons and his two grand-nephews. Julian, the elder of these, ascended the throne an enemy of the faith associated in his mind with the murder of his father, the perfidious lie of an ecclesiastic, and his own enforced insincerity. The crimes and calamities of a Court are necessarily the most striking outrages on Christian profession in the eyes of posterity, but those who lived through that turmoil had nearer and even darker problems to perplex and bewilder their trust in the Kingdom of Heaven. And this came upon men who had themselves watched the complete settlement of the Church as a dominant body, and must have looked for a redeemed world. The problem of the world and God took a new

<sup>1</sup> *Decline and Fall of Roman Empire*, iii. 110, ed. of 1807.

dimension; it was not only evil that had to be accounted for, but triumphant evil.

Brought up in this atmosphere of confusion and darkness, watched over by a pious mother who had however married and not till a late period converted a heathen, Augustine naturally turned towards a religion accepting human life here as a disastrous episode in the eternal destiny of humanity. "There have," says his latest English biographer, "been poorer theories framed in Germany in the nineteenth century, theories that have less echo in man's consciousness and less guarantee in the broad features of the world than Manichæism,"<sup>1</sup> and every reader who has attempted really to understand it will echo his opinion. Something like Manichæism has been the refuge at all times of men who have believed in God and observed the state of the world, and such a refuge was never more necessary than at the start of established Christianity. It must indeed be confessed that Augustine looked upon the evils of the world with very different eyes from what men of our time do; his allusions to the sufferings inflicted on the inhabitants of Italy by the Gothic invasion are cold, preachy, and ecclesiastical. But the ills that we regard without sympathy do not therefore lose their influence upon us. Augustine's was naturally a loving, sympathetic nature; it could not be but that an expiring world saddened his thought. His early creed reflects the profound despondency which then coloured all serious contemplation of the world. For nine years he was not only a believer in Manichæism but its ardent missionary; among those converts whom he brought to its ranks was that early lost friend

Saint  
Augustine  
a Man-  
ichæan

<sup>1</sup> *St. Augustine and his Age*, by Joseph McCabe, 1902, p. 52. This work was published after the first two editions of mine, or would have been quoted for its coincidence with any individual view expressed here of Augustine's history. The most elaborate modern work on this subject consulted by me is that by a French Roman Catholic, M. J. J. F. Poujoulat, 1852. Augustine's own *Confessions* are the authority for the first thirty years of his life, to the death of his mother.

whose appearance in the *Confessions*, bringing in a welcome human interest, almost sets the unnamed young African beside the two Englishmen to whose early death Poetry owes *Lycidas* and *In Memoriam*. And after his adherence was exchanged for a bitter antagonism we feel the taunts of his ecclesiastical opponents, that he was a Manichæan at heart, contain the clue to his deepest thought and to his influence on Mediæval Christianity.

His so-called Conversion.

That spiritual event which we know as his Conversion was both the conclusion of a gradual process of separation from the Manichæans and also an unconscious surrender to the root principle of Manichæism. Few scenes divided from us by the interval of a millennium and a half are as familiar as that in the garden at Milan,<sup>1</sup> where a couple of words heard from a neighbouring window led Augustine to a text from St. Paul, and were remembered by him as the opening of the way of salvation. But perhaps we may say that none, known in such detail, is equally difficult to understand. It is not only that the occasion seems inadequate to the result, though that is a preliminary stumbling-block. "Take and read, take and read" was, we should have thought, an unnecessary direction to the Scriptures for Augustine: while the passage in Paul's epistles<sup>2</sup> on which the volume opened would not strike us as likely to be either unfamiliar or specially helpful. Words heard often without interest or emotion do, we know, sometimes knock at the door of our attention with a wonderful weight of new meaning, a meaning which perhaps no paraphrase can convey or suggest to another mind. It would not be a great exaggeration to say that no account of a Conversion ever seems reasonable. But when we have taught ourselves by this reflection to acquiesce in the seeming unreasonableness of Augustine's, we are only on the threshold of our real difficulty. We cannot doubt, as we read of his flood of tears in the shade of a fig-tree, worthy to be remembered by the

<sup>1</sup> *Confessions*, viii. 29.

<sup>2</sup> Romans xiii. 13.



sacred Bo-tree so memorable in the career of Buddha, that those overwhelming emotions chronicle the end of an old life and the beginning of a new life. Something happened in that green shade which fitted Augustine for the part he was to play in the world, which filled the heart of his mother with joy, and was remembered by him as the breaking of a heavy and galling chain. But can any unprejudiced scrutiny, taking the passage in connection with what precedes and follows, discover here the passage of a soul from darkness to light? To answer that question in the negative is a bold step, for the Christian world is on the other side, but to the present writer the affirmative is impossible. Augustine had recently repudiated one who in all but name had been a faithful wife to him for half a generation, and was the mother of his only son;<sup>1</sup> her recall and acknowledgment would surely have been recognised by an awakened conscience as the first step in the path of duty. Yet not only did this step never occur to him, but it is plain from all he says that had the advice been given he would have rejected it as a temptation of the Evil One. Such conduct in the fifth century must, of course, not be taken as a proof of the heartless cruelty which it would demonstrate in the twentieth, but is it compatible with a spiritual crisis that turns the soul to God?

The first step towards any coherent view of Augustine's conversion is to dismiss the current impression of his youth as a career of wild profligacy. No doubt that impression is derived from his own words. But it is from quotations and summaries of his words; when they are studied attentively, impartially, and exhaustively, the black background of vice fades to a neutral tint, paler in some respects (if the foregoing reflections be sound) than the image of holiness seen

<sup>1</sup> *Confessions*, vi. 25. It is usually stated that she entered a nunnery. All Augustine says of her is that she vowed to God she would never know a man again. It would be a very natural, but not necessarily a religious, vow.

against it. He breathed an atmosphere of vice in Africa; the "upsetters"<sup>1</sup> of Roman Carthage may be set beside the Mohocks of the Stuart Restoration—those

"sons  
Of Belial, flown with insolence and wine,"

who made the London streets a terror to blameless citizens, and moved the indignation of Milton's old age. But in order to keep up his credit as a man of fashion, Augustine, like the country squire in the *Spectator*, was obliged, we learn, to draw upon his imagination. A hideous testimony to the general depravity of both epochs, but a vindication (as far as it goes) of his share in that of his own time. And it meets much corroboration. His son's name of Adeodatus may surely be accepted as a pledge that he was the child of an exclusive union, and for fourteen years, it appears, this union was one of fidelity on both sides. As Augustine was only thirty-three when he and his son, a boy of fourteen, were baptized together, any interval of license, such as popular belief prolongs to his Conversion, must have ended in his early youth. A careful attention to the facts he gives will lead most readers to the conclusion that his was an average adolescence, reviewed in his *Confessions* through an atmosphere of monkish purity. Sins enough he had to remember; the story of a perfidious trick,<sup>2</sup> by which he escaped his mother's tender watchfulness, and left her alone in Africa when he went to Italy, is one which implies many; but if we judge from narrative and not from vague and rhetorical allusion we should say that the worst were not sins of the flesh. When we think over all Augustine tells us of his mistress, and all he does not tell us, we are tempted for a moment to prefer the morality of Charles the Second and his Court to that of the saintly Bishop. The

<sup>1</sup> "Eversores."—*Confessions*, iii. 6.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* v. 15. I am astonished to find that Mr. M'Cabe (p. 68) thinks that "his frank confession in some measure redeems the meanness of his act"—lies to his mother.

dying petition of the merry monarch, "Do not let poor Nelly starve," is less remote from our ideal of Christianity than Augustine's dismissal of one who was a mother, and in all but name a wife, to a life of bereavement, perhaps of starvation. He never, as far as appears, allowed her to see their son again. The boy's name of Adeodatus testifies to his sense of the preciousness of the fatherly bond, but he behaved as if the other parent of this God-given son had no share in it or claim on him. Our nature, we see, is not capable of excess in one direction without defect in another, and where sexual vice is the supreme horror a vast tract of duty probably will always be left barren.

Modern feeling on this subject is confused and inconsistent. It stamps one set of transgressions with the special reprobation of "immorality," thus leaving on the platform of morality men whose cold hearts and selfish tempers have overshadowed their neighbours' lives with gloom, while it yet refuses honour to that condition of virginity which is the extreme opposite of this kind of sin. In the moral revolution which divides our age from that of Augustine the associations of all that is natural are transported to the side of good instead of evil; the very expression "the flesh" is antiquated, and its substitute "the body" calls up ideas rather of respect than of recoil. Nevertheless its claims are, in theory, ignored where they are most clamorous, and as a natural consequence, in practice indulged when they are strong. The fact that what is highest in man should be entangled with what is lowest, must form, for all who allow themselves to contemplate it, an appalling problem, brought no nearer solution by its veil of modern decorum. To those who watch the orbit of the world's thought the ascetic ideal seems to put forth some claim to a future as well as a past. We need no more than a return towards it under the direction of modern enlightenment in order to create if not a new Heaven, certainly a new earth. The

Mani-  
chæism  
and  
modern  
morality

best sense of a Nation, known as the Legislature, prescribes already the conditions under which a family shall be recognised; the very expression "an illegitimate son" bears witness to its refusal to sanction, in every case, the bond of paternity, a refusal commemorated even in the succession to the Throne. If the State prescribe the conditions not only under which a family should be recognised, but under which it should exist, the world might make a fresh start. A generation or two might see the extinction of poverty, of hereditary disease of body and mind, and generally of all the temptations which make life difficult and painful. And this blissful condition is one that no human being has the slightest difficulty in imagining. We have merely to accommodate our fancies to permitted discourse instead of to facts, and suppose the view of marriage sanctioned by polite dialect—that it is a union of spirits—to be the whole of the truth. The reflection how far it is from being the whole of the truth enables us to understand the belief that salvation lies in some influence which should render the body a mere instrument to the will and make men practically inhabitants of a spiritual world. The worst wickedness would remain, but all that renders ordinary life confused and impure would wither away, and leave man free to choose the good in a sense he never yet has been. This, we may believe, has at least been the experience of many an individual life; this, Augustine thought, was the work of Redemption. It is with an effort that we accept as in any sense worthy of sympathy a view so narrow, and in the form in which he held it, so revolting. But, unless we make some endeavour to find meaning in it, a great element in the thought of the world must remain hopelessly unintelligible to us.

Mani-  
chæism  
and  
mediæval  
morality

In this sense it must be said that the heresy to which Augustine adhered in his youth, and of which he became in his maturity so fierce an opponent, was a permanent

influence on his moral creed. He remained to the end of his long life a Manichæan as far as the impulses of Nature are concerned; to him they were evil, and *the* evil. The ideal life for man was one in which they were so resolutely and consistently ignored that they should cease to assert themselves, that Man should live the life of a spiritual being, his material framework no more to him than a mere garment, not in any sense part of himself. The belief, Augustine often and earnestly protested, is no condemnation of marriage, the ordinary obligations of which may be a duty. But it matters little whether we condemn, or relegate to a subordinate and doubtful position, those emotions which exercise the whole of man's being. In practice the two prove indistinguishable. We have seen, at the opening of Augustine's Christian career, how his sense of purity deadened his conscience to sacred claim. We may set beside this picture of his youth one taken from the last scene of his life, and exhibiting this baleful influence as an antagonist to the bonds which create not only the family, but that larger union, known to us under various forms as the State.

Roman Africa—the rich and fertile district north of Mount Atlas, then, it is believed, more fertile than now—was during the last years of Augustine's life a victim to the invasion of those barbaric hordes from whom we have taken our title for any act of indiscriminate destruction. Spain had been for some years in the hands of the Vandals, and it is unlikely that they would not in any case have crossed, sooner or later, the narrow strip of sea dividing them from so rich a prey, but the actual cause of their rush upon it was one which in any age but this we should be inclined to pronounce incredible. It was the invitation of a brave soldier and deeply religious man, such as no conceivable temptation, we may say fearlessly, could in England or France convert to a

in a world  
where the  
State had  
lost its  
sanctity



traitor. If we could blot from our minds the surrender of North Africa to pillage and massacre we should say that Boniface, Count of Africa under Valentinian III., came very near the ideal of a Christian warrior. History records an instance of his fearless justice such as we can rarely indeed associate with the name of a general engaged in the terrible business of war.<sup>1</sup> A peasant visited his tent during one of his campaigns, to lodge a complaint against a soldier whom he accused of seducing his wife. A weighty tribute to the character of a commander on active service is conveyed in the mere fact of his being the object of such an appeal; but we may add that the appeal was successful. The peasant was bidden to return to the general's tent on the morrow; the intervening night was occupied with a ride of nearly twenty miles, a perilous watch in or near a chamber of guilty love, and the execution of an adulterer whereby the general lost a recruit. When the peasant again presented himself in the tent of Boniface he was shown the severed head of his enemy. How many a lowly cot in Africa did Boniface give up to the calamities of which he here avenged a single case so terribly, when it was a question of self-vindication and vengeance! His treason had the poor excuse of hostile treachery, and the thousands of lives he sacrificed in Africa may perhaps have saved his own for a few years. Ætius, the jealous rival whose slanders had poisoned the mind of the empress-mother Placidia against him, succeeded by similar arts in persuading him that his ruin was determined on at the Palace, and created the disloyalty he began by falsely imputing. Boniface strove vainly, after discovering the perfidy which had made him a rebel, to dismiss the allies he had summoned. He became a fellow-prisoner with Augustine at Hippo during the Vandal siege, and after

<sup>1</sup> For the following account see Gibbon, ch. 33, and Hodgkin, *Italy and her Invaders*, vol. i. 495-503.

escaping the horrors of its conclusion, lost his life in conflict with the rival who had poisoned it. The fate of that rival was no less tracked by Nemesis. On the field of Chalons he defended the Empire against the terrible Attila, and only three years later was stabbed to the heart by the Emperor, the last of the dynasty of Theodosius, and almost the last of Rome. How completely its ideal had already perished is manifest to one who follows this tangle of treachery and murder, and remembers that the strife was inspired by no divergent fanaticism for any principle, good or bad, not even by race-hatred or dynastic ambition, but simply and solely by individual rapacity, envy, and hatred. Men were not worse then than they were earlier or later—human nature is no worse at one time than at another. But they stood on a slope much less sheltered from moral precipices than either their sons or their fathers. Many pressed up steep paths towards heights then clearly visible, now so often hid and so dimly revealed that for many gazers they are confused with the clouds which veil them; but still more numerous, in all probability, were those who would now linger on safe terraces, and who then, left to purely individual instincts and yielding to the pull of moral gravitation, slid downwards to the abyss.

Vividly do we realise the last half of this change when we remember that two men, one of whom plunged his country in the horrors of barbaric invasion, while the other added to this guilt that of perfidious lying, have both been called the last of the Romans. But perhaps the attitude of Augustine towards one of them is a yet more striking illustration of the changed value of national claim, the inverted estimate of public and private duty, the deadening influence on manhood of a morbid worship of purity. In a letter to Boniface written in the last year but one of his life, the saintly Bishop refers to what for a true Roman would have been worse than parricide, with regret and

Public duty  
non-  
existent.

reproach, but almost without indignation. Boniface's responsibility for the Vandal invasion is thrown into the shade by another crime for which Augustine reserves all his urgency. News has come to him of a lapse from righteousness at which he has shuddered; but it is not that by which Boniface has surrendered Africa to the sword and torch of the barbarian. It is that by which he has violated a vow of continence, and taken to himself a second wife.

Letter of  
Augustine  
to the  
betrayers of  
Africa.

"Hear me, my son;" it is thus that Augustine addresses Boniface; "hear our Lord speaking through the channel of my weakness. Remember what you were in the lifetime and immediately after the death of your first wife of happy memory, what horror you then had of the vanity of this world, and how you desired the service of God. I do not think the worldly cares with which you are now absorbed can have obliterated from your memory your yearnings to lay aside all public employments in order to devote yourself to that service. You were withheld from a monastic life only by my urgency in representing to you the gain of the Church" (not, be it noted, the claim of the State) "in your protection against the barbarians, you meanwhile seeking nothing from the world but necessary support, and carrying into its work the purity of the monastery. Amid such hopes as these came the crushing intelligence of your marriage. I had to learn that a holy vow was broken, and that lust was triumphant." This is the real calamity. A desolated province, fertile fields turned to a waste, stately and opulent cities to a heap of blackened ruins, peaceful and prosperous communities massacred or tortured, and represented only by a few starving fugitives—all this was within the mental and almost the physical view of the Bishop of Hippo when he wrote, and he proceeds to deplore the public evils for which his correspondent was responsible. But he begins and ends with lament over the fall by which the soldier has ceased to be a monk, and in comparison seems almost to excuse the crime by which he has ceased to be a Roman.

It is indeed in the strange inadequacy and inappropriateness of this part of Augustine's rebuke that we feel the blank of all that to an Englishman presents the highest aspect of duty. Rebuke is almost too strong a word for his allusion to the act which was to devastate Africa. With the omission of a few words, the letter would suggest, as the subject of remonstrance, some private quarrel of no great importance, in which his correspondent might conceivably produce evidence to render his action justifiable in the eye of the world. "You say your cause is just, and I, being unable to hear the other side, am no competent judge of it, but can you deny that these necessities would never have come upon you if you had not exchanged that contempt for worldly things which I knew in you for an eager love of them? . . . I cannot judge you, do you judge yourself. Africa suffers for the sins of her people, but it is sad to have to look upon you as one of the wicked whom God uses as His scourge." These last words are the only approach to such language as an Englishman might use, if he condescended to use any words at all, towards a Wellington who had invited a French army to desolate the English coast, and the letter immediately proceeds to a kind of remonstrance which takes all meaning out of them. "He who would follow Christ must love his enemies, and whether you are called upon to return good for evil, or good for good, a question which I have neither the will nor the power to argue, your duty as a Christian is equally clear. As to your temporal welfare I have no advice to give you; wealth and power belong to the realm of chance. But if you consult me concerning your salvation, if you remember the words, What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?—I say to you, Love not the world, neither the things of the world. Conquer the desires through which the world is loved, repent your former submission to them. If you had no wife I would urge you to persevere in holy continence, and add a recommendation to that life of

The ascetic  
has slain  
the patriot

religious retirement which I formerly forbade. But now you have to consider the claims of her who, ignorant of your vow, married you quite innocently, and, if it be impossible to gain her consent to a sisterly relation, at least keep conjugal purity, and pray for a possibility of higher perfection. Charity has commanded me to write thus to you, dearest son, loving you as I do in the Spirit of God and not of this world, and remembering what is written (Prov. ix. 8), 'Correct the wise man and he will love thee.'" Surely a correction so inadequate, so distorted, so mixed with irrelevant issues, must be set down in the review of history as a cowardly absolution of a vast and irreparable crime.

Holiness  
has  
eclipsed  
Virtue.

He who, living in the spirit of the Sermon on the Mount, made it his daily endeavour to requite curses with blessings, would be as incapable of betraying an imperial trust, and bringing the horrors of hostile occupation on the country he had undertaken to protect, as an honourable worldly man who "felt a stain as a wound." More incapable he could not be, for there are no degrees in impossibility. To prepare for understanding and obeying the most difficult commands of Christ by making a clean sweep of the duties recognised by ordinary human rectitude is to cloud the vision which reveals both. An honourable man of the world may be blind to the virtues of the saint. But the saint who is blind to the virtues of an honourable man of the world prepares such hypocrites as those of whom the Saviour declared that He knew not how they could escape the damnation of hell.

Duty  
centres in  
the  
Cloister.

It would be hard to produce another document as illuminative of the moral difference between two ages as that letter from the Bishop of Hippo to the Count of Africa. We see that the moral framework of the ancient world is shattered to atoms. *Dulce et decorum est pro patriâ mori* is a sentence that has lost its meaning; there is no country to defend; there is only, for the selfish and ambitious, a career open to talents, for the spiritual



minded an opportunity for saving one's own and other souls. Relation is almost purely individual. It knows nothing of the City or the Nation, it knows little of the Family. Ideal relation would know as little of the smaller group as of the larger; the Christian strives to ignore the Family as completely as the State. Probably it is by an exceptional sense of justice that St. Augustine allows for the claim of a wife to whom the position should never have been conceded. We might indeed permit ourselves to fancy his lapses into a broader view to have been offences against that spirit of the age which seems mysteriously to claim reverence as well as mould inclination; the reader has seen in our quotation how he refused an application for the Cloister whereby the Empire, it seemed, would lose a powerful defender, and how, in fact, he thereby created for the Empire a deadly foe. It is pathetic to think that the last moments of earthly life to the Saint must have been embittered—so far as any earthly event can embitter the meditations of one who trusts God—by the reflection that the hosts closing round his episcopal city and preparing for it a fate he must have shuddered to contemplate, would never have been summoned to Africa but for an advice which he must have given with the utmost reluctance and pain. Even the slight and poor approach made by the great Saint of the fifth century towards anything that can be called patriotism must have appeared to him on his deathbed a calamitous, if even an innocent mistake.

These episodes in the biography of St. Augustine, taken, the one from the start of his Christian career, the other from the close of his life, exhibit what was permanent and effective in his Manichæism. They show the moral influence of that view which discovers the origin of Evil in the existence of a material substratum to our being. It is a view dominant for many ages in the Christian Church, and so far as it is due to a single personality we may trace it to the great man whose history we have been considering.

Originality  
in August-  
ine's doc-  
trine of  
the Fall

But in his mind it did not stand alone. The Hebrew explanation of Evil was that which he consciously adopted, and although, as we must repeat, the two when strictly considered are logical alternatives, yet their combination in the system of St. Augustine is one of the great intellectual creations of the world. It has been the foundation of immortal poetry, and has thrown its shadow so strongly over the page of Scripture that some suppose it finds its foundation there. Its attractions are not felt to-day, they belong to a bygone world. But they may be understood at all times, and in the endeavour to understand them we gather up some of the great influences of the world's history.

The Fall  
a combina-  
tion of  
Hebraic  
and  
Hellenic  
thought.

The doctrine of the Fall, as Augustine conceived and bequeathed it, built an imposing fortress facing the intrusive difficulty, and seeming to defy what it concealed. This is all we can say of any theory of the origin of Evil, and it is more than we can say of any other, for in this are combined both those answers to the difficulty, each of which have satisfied many minds. As an explanation of this present state of things it is Manichæan. It asserts that since the flesh is *now* naturally allied with Evil, we may say that Matter and Spirit, as far as our experience goes, are confronted as Evil and Good. But it rejects with abhorrence the Manichæan idea that this was the original condition of existence, and though it virtually concedes that the ultimate destiny of the universe is such a condition, it throws the responsibility on Man and not on God. Finding that Matter and Evil are at present associated, everywhere prevalent now and here, it yet insists that the *origin* of Evil was not in anything material, but in the very opposite, in that by which persons are distinguished from things—in the power of choice. As the Manichæans believed Evil to be inherent in the nature which is necessarily and completely non-moral, so Augustine, in his recoil from their doctrine, believed it to be potentially existent in the very nature of a moral creature, as the

traced it to the opposite of Personality, to what we might call *thingness*, so he discovered it within the very core of Personality itself. Will could have no meaning, he thought, except as the choice between Good and Evil. A man who could not err would be a mere machine; goodness, separated from all effort, would lose its moral character. To transfer virtue from Will to Nature would be to annihilate it; it means the choice of good, and if we suppose it in the region behind choice it ceases to exist. In Nature there was no Evil; Nature did not admit of Evil. Will was something of which the very essence was its capacity of manufacturing Evil. Man was created free to choose between Good and Evil, though Evil did not exist till he called it into being, for the privilege of remaining the voluntary subject of God implied the capacity actually chosen by Man of becoming a rebel against Him; and this choice proved the creation of Evil.

The first man, in the view of Augustine,<sup>1</sup> was a wholly exceptional being. He was a free agent in a sense none of his descendants were. The Spirit, in him, was lord of the flesh as a master of a slave; he chose to disobey a simple and easy command, as no subsequent member of the race could ever choose to obey or disobey God. Adam was the one free-man of the human race, the only one, that is, who began with freedom. The work of a second Adam regained some shadow of that freedom for His redeemed ones; but Adam started free, the flesh for him was a mere instrument, an instrument absolutely obedient to his Will, while he was obedient to the Will of God. This is the ideal hierarchy. God is the soul of all souls; what a man's hand is to his Will, that his Will should be to God; that Adam's Will was to God, and might so have remained. But obedience implies choice. Choice implies alternatives to choose from. The power of obeying a command is the power of disobeying it. To call into existence

Evil the  
shadow of  
Freewill

<sup>1</sup> The writings from which this account is taken—the anti-Manichean treatises on the one hand, the anti-Pelagian on the other—are all included in vol. xiii. of the Benedictine edition.

a creature who *could* yield to his Creator the allegiance of a subject was to endow him with the power of withholding it—with the power, that is, of calling Evil into existence. And when once he had called it into existence (and here we return to Manichæism), Man could never be totally free again. Men are in bondage, but Man was created free.

Original  
Sin.

But what is it to which men are in bondage? Here we come upon the special significance of the Augustinian scheme. We have said that it is only half-known to the readers and thinkers of our day. We might say that it is less than half-known, for it has happened through the influence of modern taste that the indispensable element has been dropped. Original Sin was not to Augustine a mere vague synonym for the frailty of human nature; it was a definite name for that impulse whereby man's physical nature initiates a new life.<sup>1</sup> That a man should choose to be a father, as he chooses to be a physician or a teacher, might (Augustine would allow) be a good thing or a bad thing according to circumstances, but the fact that in any case the choice should be impelled by the flesh appeared to him not only *an* evil, but *the* evil. It was not only something deplorable in itself; it seemed, since none could enter on life untainted by this poison, a commemoration of some colossal disaster affecting the whole human race. Every birth, before that of Christ, commemorated some vast dislocation throughout the whole of Nature whereby, as the subordination of man to God was forgotten,

<sup>1</sup> See *De Peccatorum Meritis et Remissione*, passim. The keynote of his system is the absolute necessity of baptism (De ovibus ejus non esse incipiant parvuli, nisi per baptismum, I. c. xxvii. 40). Even Julian the Pelagian, the most broad-minded of his antagonists, seems not to have ventured to dispute this in words, though he speaks of its logical consequences with horror. The fact that many infants die without it, and that their consequent damnation cannot be due to any sin of their own, merely emphasised, for Augustine, the *reatus* conveyed in the act of generation and removed only by the sacrament of regeneration. He saw very clearly what his opponents did not, that there is no more difficulty to a logical mind in believing an innocent babe to be damned eternally than in believing this of any soul created by God.



the subordination of Matter to Spirit was destroyed, and the flesh, which should be to man an obedient servant, became an imperious master. Such a dislocation he imagined himself to find adumbrated in the Scriptural account of the expulsion from Eden, and his view, made decorous at the expense of its logic, has ever since his time been read into the Bible. He imposes not a little tedium and some disgust on his readers in the endeavour to distinguish his view from the discarded heresy of his youth. It is not any bodily condition which in itself is evil, he insists, but the fact that the bodily condition should dominate the Will. It was his rebellion which destroyed the true hierarchy, and reflected his own disobedience on that of the flesh to the Spirit. The part of his theory which has dropped out was essential to its symmetry and logical coherence, yet so vast and majestic is the conception, that even thus mutilated this theory is the foundation of one of the world's great epics, and also of a creed that has only lately ceased to represent modern orthodoxy.

In our endeavour to appreciate this scheme we must take our start where Augustine did, and often return to this point. We must suppose here, as in the Gnostic and Manichæan schemes, that the Creation of this world in some sense commemorated the defeat of God, an idea so little alien from the orthodox doctrine of the Fall, that Milton approaches it in the declaration he puts into the mouth of the Creator after speaking of Satan's rebellion—

The  
Creator  
commem-  
orates the  
Fall

"But, lest his heart exalt him in the harm  
Already done, to have dispeopled Heaven,  
My damage fondly deemed, I can repair  
That detriment, if such it be to lose  
Self lost; and in a moment will create  
Another world, out of one man a race  
Of men innumerable, there to dwell."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Paradise Lost*, vi., 150-156, a passage in which the confusion seems to me very significant. It seems impossible to construe "self lost" in any intelligible form.



From these words we gather that the earth would never have been carved out of Chaos but for the apostacy of Satan. Here Milton's democracy appears to assert itself against his theology; the lines come perilously near the hollow boast of a defeated monarch. Such a defeat was certainly a part of the early belief of Augustine, and its influence is clearly seen even in his energetic recoil from it. The conception of a defeated God, when once he discarded it, would seem to his mind a plunge into the lowest depths of Heathenism. A vast defeat of the powers of Good was indeed needed to explain the world around him, but it could not be a defeat of God. An ideal man arose to take the place of God—a Man so exceptional, so exalted, that he could bear the weight of all that load of responsibility which previously had rested on his Creator. This miraculous being, mounted on the loftiest peak of human existence and enhaloed by the sunrise of Creation, might well have appeared to the descendants he had sold into slavery as something more than man; he was, in an important sense, the Creator of all the actual conditions of men's lives. For no new human life could arise without a reminiscence and revival of that inverted order by which, as Man had striven to manifest independence of God, so the Flesh was erected into a permanent rebel against the Spirit, and often a victorious rebel. Such a view is both a bequest from and a revolt against Manichæism. A bequest from it: since Evil is here something so closely allied with man's material framework that from some points of view it would be more natural to say that Matter was itself Evil. A revolt against it: for this alliance with Evil which every birth, except that of Christ, commemorates and prepares, is not as in Manichæism the record of an eternal distinction, but something which began to exist with the Will of a creature, and commemorates his rebellion against his Creator.

The Dem-  
argus re-  
turns in  
Adam.

No Biblical  
authority  
for this  
view

Only by a strange activity of logic and fancy could this theory of the Fall ever have been traced to the Hebrew Scriptures. Any one who reads intelligently the narrative

there given of the life of our earliest ancestors discerns that not only is no support given to this view, but that some things said there are antagonistic to it. The first man, according to the account in the second and third chapters of Genesis, disobeyed the single command of his Creator, and was punished by the exchange from the easy cultivation of a garden to the arduous tilling of the soil beyond its forfeited domain; but this parable, like those of Christ, seems rather to transfigure the development of an individual character than to adumbrate the moral history of the human race, and certainly we find no trace of that inheritance of guilt which forms the central idea of the elaborate system bequeathed by Augustine to popular theology. The first murderer in the world is addressed in language quite incompatible with any such theory. "Why art thou wroth, and why is thy countenance fallen?" is the fatherly remonstrance of the Creator to Cain; "if thou doest well shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well sin coucheth at the door. And unto thee is its desire, but thou shouldest rule over it." We owe it to the labour of our Revisers that the last sentence is for the first time intelligible, but the tone of the address, even in its old form, is irreconcilable with the idea of a fallen race, as is indeed the whole subsequent narrative of Genesis. St. Paul must be considered its author by any one determined to find Biblical authority for it, but even on his difficult page we can find no material for the most characteristic portion of Augustine's theory of the Fall of Man.

To approach any such discovery we must lift Adam above humanity, and connect his history with an obscure and incomplete fragment embodied in the sixth chapter of Genesis, which appears to narrate the Fall of the Angels. As given in the Old Testament, it cannot indeed form any part of the explanation of the Fall of Man, to which it is long subsequent. Nevertheless, as we study different renderings of this tradition we are led to feel that to the mediæval

It is adumbrated in the Jewish apocalyptic literature

mind, at all events, as represented by Augustine, the sin of the sons of God, who saw the daughters of men that they were fair, more truly represented the moral aspect of the Fall of Man than did the history of Adam. The legend of which we find this faint trace in Genesis is largely expanded elsewhere. To the Hebrew mind the narrative of events within the range of ordinary experience formed but a small portion of the true history of the world. The eye of Imagination, guided by the lamp of Faith, seemed to this race of Seers more penetrating and no less trustworthy than the outward senses and the logical faculty by which their testimony is tested and controlled. We best understand such a state of mind in studying the work of great poets. How much has the genius of Milton done to transform the narrative of Genesis! The poet of the West is more consciously a Creator than the poet of the East, but his work is not to him any more fictitious. Perhaps we come nearest an understanding of the Jewish Apocalyptic literature<sup>1</sup> when we compare it with the poem of Dante. These writings paint a universe similar to his in its general plan<sup>2</sup> and in many details, and are animated

<sup>1</sup> That is to say, the literature of which the grandest specimen is the Apocalypse of St. John, and to which all the prophetic books of the Old Testament contain large contributions. Outside the Bible the best known specimen is the Book of Enoch, quoted in the Epistle of Jude as the work of Enoch himself, although the writer of that Epistle could not be separated from the latest editor of the book by much more than a hundred years. The translation used in the first editions of the present work was that of Dillman; since that time the noble work of Mr. R. H. Charles (Clarendon Press, 1893) has or should have made this apocryphal work familiar to all Biblical students. A later publication by the same editor *Book of the Secrets of Enoch*, translated from the Slavonic by W. R. Morfil, 1896, adds some interesting touches to the impression left by the earlier work. The two together must be taken as the survival of a wide group of Revelations associated with the name of Enoch as the Psalms with David and the Proverbs with Solomon.

<sup>2</sup> This applies especially to another book of the same character containing Christian elements, the *Ascension of Isaiah*, edited by the same masterly hand (Edinburgh, 1900). It is difficult not to believe that the *Paradiso* contains reflections of this book, a fragmentary Latin translation of which may conceivably have been seen by Dante. But the similarity is more probably due to a common spirit and a common inheritance of conceptions of the Universe.

by a spirit of kindred fervour. The Italian and English poets, taken together, give a modern reader some idea of that portion of Hebrew literature which, though its larger portion is not embodied either in the Hebrew or the Greek Bible, carries on much of what is most characteristic in the writings of the Hebrew Prophets, and melts into the same background as the Apocalypse of St. John.

We must regard the story of the angelic fall as a product of that instinct in man which, seeking to explain the inexplicable, succeeds in removing and partly concealing it behind a structure of imaginative event. How, under a beneficent and omnipotent Creator, evil *began to exist*, is a question which the mind of our time, disciplined by the teaching of Science, perceives to be unanswerable by such intellect as we possess or can conceive. But it is easy enough to imagine discontent with the provisions of an actual monarch, and to transfer the miseries of unsuccessful rebellion to the Heavens. The fall of Man failed to remove the initial act of rebellion far enough into the dim distance, and Jewish thought made an advance towards the Persian Dualism, but stopped short of it. A tempter was needed in Paradise. Nay, a tempter was needed in Heaven. But it became evident that unless Ormazd was to be always confronted with Ahriman, a start must be made with some powerful and originally blameless being who called Evil into existence. The original Satan must have been an angel of Light, whose sole moral peril was a position so exalted that, like the Gnostic Demiurgus, its occupant mistook it for the Highest. "The princes and gods of this world have said, 'We are alone and there is none beside us.'"<sup>1</sup> These are "the Angels who kept not their first estate" of St. Peter and Jude, with whom the Lord is angry because "they do

Two versions of the Angelic crime.

<sup>1</sup> *Discourses of Isaiah* (ed. Charles), p. 71, x. 13. This is part of an address of "the Most High, the Father of my Lord" to Christ, heard by Isaiah in the Seventh Heaven. Compare John xvi. 11; 2 Cor. x. 4.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Peter ii. 4. Jude 1.



as if they were like the Lord," and whose unique crime has a unique penalty, "neither angel nor man will have his portion in it, but alone they undergo their judgment for ever and ever."<sup>1</sup> It is one of these who led astray Eve, and all her posterity, but it is "the inciter" himself who in the time of her grandson perverted the angels still remaining in Heaven, "and led them astray through the daughters of men."<sup>2</sup> But what Spirit of evil led "the inciter" astray? Here Logic, wearied with the pursuit of Cause which would have led to an infinite regress, made over the rest of the work to Imagination. It was not difficult to imagine discontent in Heaven. We may find discontent in the conditions of Earth least unlike Heaven. Rasselas, Prince of Abyssinia, was discontented with his home in the Happy Valley, and probably few readers of Dr. Johnson's romance have failed to sympathise with him. The legend gives the discontent of his celestial predecessors in a twofold form. The original rebels sought to rise above their subordinate position; their successors determined to sink below their purely spiritual position. The first envied God His throne; the second envied Man his sensual pleasures. It is the first of these which is made known to the English reader by Shakespeare's *Wolsey*, and by Milton's magnificent expansion of the two lines—

"Cromwell, I charge thee, fling away Ambition,  
By that sin fell the angels."

<sup>1</sup> *Book of Enoch*, lxviii. 4, 5, the reason given by the archangel Michael to Rafael (so spelt throughout this part of the book) for not acceding to his plea to make intercession for their fallen brethren. Michael is at first inclined to sympathise, but the impulse of mercy is discarded when he stands before "the Lord of Spirits." It wonderfully illuminates the Gospels to note that throughout these books men and angels are represented as more merciful than God, who rejoices at the punishment of the rebels like a vindictive earthly monarch.

<sup>2</sup> *Jeqūn*, so translated by Charles. The name of Eve's tempter is Asbeel. The list is very like the muster of the rebel angels in the 4<sup>th</sup> book of *Paradise Lost*.



This familiar version of the legend is the most rational. The sin of spiritual beings should be spiritual. The temptations of the animal nature are an intrusion in the heavenly realm not only to the moral vision but to the sense of intellectual coherence. Nevertheless this second angelic crime is the one which we should bear in mind if we would understand not only the speculations of Augustine, but the course of Christian life for a thousand years. We must forget *Paradise Lost*; we must relegate the angels whose crime and punishment are thus unique into the background, and dwell on that angelic sin which was the very opposite of Ambition. The offence of the Angels with whom we should associate the Augustinian Adam was not the desire to reign in Heaven but the unwillingness to remain there; it was a readiness to part with their birth-right for temptations no less material than Esau's. The life of spirit was insufficient for them; the seductions of carnal life brought them to abdicate their place in Heaven and descend to life on Earth—to life, and also to death. For it was indeed according to this legend, the yearning of spiritual beings after sensual enjoyment, which “brought death into *their* world, and all *their* woe.” Actions necessary for the continued existence of mankind, and thus innocent in men, become a deadly sin in those whose eternal life ought to have been enough for them, and in the day when they entered on that lower life they entered on the realm of death.<sup>1</sup> The speculations of early Christianity supplied much material for blending this legend with that of Adam. It was supposed by many early thinkers that he was in Paradise a purely spiritual being; the clothing with skins was in truth (in this version of the legend) the creation of Man as we know him now,<sup>2</sup> inhabiting a body; and all that went

<sup>1</sup> *Book of Enoch*, xv. 1-7.

<sup>2</sup> Augustine seems at first to have confronted the idea of the Fall under this aspect as a literal historic fact. It is a question, he says (*De Libero Arbitrio*, I. xii. 24), if the mind did not live elsewhere before its junction

before must be regarded as but another form of that experience which hovered before the mind of the Greek poet when he imagined himself "obedient to mad strife" because in a mysterious pre-natal condition he had disobeyed the law of his being, and was condemned in consequence to sojourn on the Purgatory of this earth.

Adam a  
super-  
natural  
being.

The Fall of the Angels was thus at the rise of Christianity an accepted belief, and had even taken a twofold form according as spiritual or fleshly temptation supplied its motive. But the Prologue in Heaven needed its earthly sequel; it became the mere rehearsal of the drama truly interesting to man. The scheme of Genesis imagines the disobedience of *a* man and his punishment of exile from the garden which had been the scene of his easy labours to a land where they were to be more arduous. The scheme of Augustine imagines the fall of Man from Heaven to Earth. The biblical Adam is a mere man; his sons are good and bad like any other human family. The Augustinian Adam was an exalted and unique being, a Prometheus visited with the vengeance of a Zeus who appears as little more than a victorious foe; his progeny are all overshadowed by a curse. Whether we call him Adam, or whether we call him Satan, he is in truth a demigod. He represents the supernatural type of Freedom.

Evil the  
shadow of  
liberty, a  
satisfying  
thought.

The scheme evolved from this myth by the genius of Augustine, as it is known to the students of Evangelical theology, is a mighty ruin, recording on a vast scale the needs and methods of an age long since passed away. Like other ruins it has become a quarry; a modern edifice has been built with its stones. Modern, indeed, is not a suitable word to describe any such structure to the ears of the twentieth century; theories that date from a dozen cen-

with the body. He was then urging the moral liberty of Man against Manichæans, as strenuously as he was afterwards to urge the moral bondage of men against the Pelagians, but the idea of Empedocles and Plato seems to have suggested itself as a meeting point and harmony between two apparently inconsistent lines of thought.

turies after Augustine are confounded with his in a common antiquity, or let us say a common obsolescence, for our own time. Yet probably there are still many to whom the explanation of Evil as the shadow of moral Liberty comes with a satisfying force. The evils of actual experience do bring forth a good which, so far as we can see, could never be brought forth without them. It is impossible to conceive of courage being exhibited or developed in the midst of safety, of honesty in the owner of boundless wealth, of fortitude amid luxury, of generosity in one who had no opportunity of self-sacrifice. "A brave man" is an expression that implies peril; we cannot call any one unselfish unless he or his neighbour had had to put up with something unpleasant, or patient without informing our hearer that he has suffered pain. If we are to have virtues, we must have danger, privation, hardship, difficulty. Virtue could no more exist without evil than light without shadow; we cannot invest an angel with the attributes of a hero unless we are prepared to see him converted to a Satan; and if we are to imagine a hero in the Garden of Eden, we must feel the Tempter there. We are then confronted with the difficulty of accounting for the Tempter, and discover, if we are logical, that we have merely removed all perplexity a step backwards. But to men struggling with the difficulties and oppressed by the sufferings of life there is vast help and encouragement in any glimpse revealing these difficulties and sufferings as the needed background of virtue; and such help and encouragement is mistaken for a logical satisfaction which neither this view nor any other dealing with the origin of Evil can supply. The spectacle of victory over temptation is so impressive, so sustaining, and so full of inspiring hope, that while it is contemplated it seems an answer to the question why God permits temptation; it throws into the shade even the further question,—does the result justify the price paid for it?

Fallacy of  
this view

For this, after all, is the real difficulty. Perhaps we might imagine a world in which no sin or misery should exist beyond what should be justified by the virtue and joy visible by its side, but to say that this world is one we can thus explain is merely to invite attention to its failures. Those who urge that evil was permitted in order that men might see evil and choose good, charge themselves with the responsibility of showing that this is what actually happens. They are powerless with any one who believes that men do on the whole see good and choose evil; they are refuted by a single instance of a life where the choice between good and evil was impossible. They have no answer to the Platonic Socrates when he expresses his belief that "great potentates are mostly bad," or to Browning's Paracelsus when he declares—

"I know as much of any will of God's,  
As knows some dumb and tortured brute what Man,  
His stern lord, wills from the perplexing blows  
That plague him every way; but there, of course,  
Where least he suffers, longest he remains."

How many dumb millions living in this planet might thus record their experience if they were endowed with the poet's genius? For those who are unable to believe that God's consolations transcend man's imaginings, there is no refuge between a resolute blindness to the conditions of the world and thoughts averted from God. The human ruler or educator who has arranged any scheme of probation or education in the hope that those subject to his influence will do one thing, has made a blunder if in fact they do another; and if it is only reverence for infinite wisdom which is to check our criticism of a plan supposed Divine, that reverence had better check the speculation at its origin.

This fallacy  
was hidden  
in the new  
basis of in-  
dividuality.

These difficulties were not felt at the dawn of Christianity as they are now. When the City had perished, and before the Nation was born, the individual life



emerged into a distinctness that it never had possessed before, into a separateness that it has not retained. All that belongs to the life of Self was for the moment illuminated by the focal light of exclusive attention, and that idea of Moral Liberty which lies at its core emerged into a dazzling distinctness. It was an important chapter in the history of moral thought when it paused between the life of the City and that of the Nation, as on a narrow isthmus joining two continents. It was the starting-point of a new phase of moral life. Much which then began has lasted ever since. But also by the very fact that this age was a starting-point, much which characterised it has since passed away. The sense of the completeness of the individual life which we meet first in the writings of the Stoics, and which was absorbed and intensified by early Christianity, is not recognised as true by the mind of our day. In looking back on it through the development of subsequent ages we see it to be the inevitable illusion of the first embrace with which men greet a new idea. Man is not free as the Stoic thought him free. "The hand cannot say to the head I have no need of thee." That is the warning of the first great man whom the world knows as a Christian, but it was hardly realised in the age which followed the preaching of Paul. To men inheriting an unalterable conviction that Liberty was the ultimate good for man, and inhabiting a world in which Liberty could not continue to mean, as it had always done up to that time, citizenship in an independent State, the idea of Moral Liberty came with a sudden and partially illusive splendour. The orb just visible above the horizon looms larger than in its midday career, and all new ideas are expanded in an atmosphere of intellectual dawn.

The Stoic view of Will may be instructively compared with the Platonic view of Knowledge. Plato had exaggerated the scope of our intellectual faculty, ignoring its limitations and confusing its boundaries; the Stoics had done the like with human volition. Plato thought that the

Analogy  
with  
Platonic  
intellectualism



knowledge of good involved the choice of good. The Stoics thought that the choice of good involved the annihilation of evil. But the similar and opposite mistakes had a different result, corresponding to the differences of political surroundings. A world drained of political life knows nothing of those large and obvious illustrations of Will which bring home to men's minds both its meaning and its limitations. The Stoics could say anything they liked about its grandeur because it had no platform on which its exercise could be manifested to the eye of the world. Man considered as a member of the State had found Liberty in his relation to that organic whole which explained and justified his existence; and though this ideal perished when the City was swallowed up in the Empire, the aspirations which it had nourished remained untouched. Liberty was still the word of magic import, though the thing that was meant by Liberty, in the word's old sense, had become impossible. Around this symbol all associations of desire had gathered, and from this they refused to be separated. And thus the idea of Liberty, as it was banished from the political, entered the spiritual domain. It detached itself from political life just when political life was shedding its leaves before its long winter, and migrating to another hemisphere, breathed the air of spring. We must remember its earlier associations if we would understand its later development. When modern thinkers account for Evil by insisting on the value of Liberty they bring two conceptions together which will not fit each other. But Liberty, in these early ages, stood undwarfed by the neighbourhood of all that was mightiest. There was nothing that men thought too much to endure in order to make a Commonwealth free. Why should it be otherwise for a world?

Humanity, as far as individual experience goes, must at all times be familiar with that sense of failure which, far more than achievement, conveys true instruction as to the nature and limits of human volition. The mournful

Chris-  
tianity thus  
absorbing  
the anti-  
civil char-  
acter of  
Stoicism.

declaration that "the things that I would, I do not," is the experience of men and women in every age. But in order to exhibit to the world the power and the limitations of human Will there must be aims, achievements, aspirations on the scale of a national life. This vision was lacking to the men who saw Christianity made an imperial religion, as it had been lacking to those whom we may regard as their spiritual fathers—the Stoics of the age of Death. What Stoicism had done was to prepare the life of the cloister. The Stoic aim was an individual detachment from the hopes and fears of ordinary life, and this aim they actually achieved. It was by a natural inference, so long as all effort remained individual, that the realm of Will was supposed to be boundless. But this view of human Will, when it came to be inherited by men awakening to a corporate interest, was felt to be a fragment. To be made consistent with the aspect of the world at the rise of the Church some addition was necessary which should explain the state of things in which men who might have been heroes chose to be slaves. This explanation was exactly what Augustine supplied. We can imagine him taking up a treatise of Epictetus, and making it the text of a sermon. Nothing that the Stoics had said of the dignity and scope of human Will was exaggerated, as far as it applied to *Man*. Those only could regard it as an over-statement who tried to discover its applicability to *Men*. Man had been all that Epictetus thought him, supreme ruler over this subordinate world of good and evil, subject only to those laws of the outer world which, to the wise man, were a matter of indifference; in all the region of desire, an absolute lord. *Men*, it is true, were the exact opposite of this. They were in bondage to that which should have been beneath them. So far the Stoic and the Christian must be in agreement; if any one thought of humanity as Epictetus did, he must allow that the men who surrounded Nero could hardly be taken as average specimens of humanity. But there he came to a stop. He had to

recognise a chasm between typical humanity and average humanity which he made no effort to explain. His philosophy contemplated Man as he is in blank despair, and could be justified only by the hope of a marvellous transformation in which new desires, new aims, new fears, should suddenly become the property of the human race.

The  
Church  
succeeds to  
the City

Christianity, as Augustine remodelled it, crossed this chasm between the ideal and the real Man by a logical bridge, so firm in its construction that it lasted for centuries, and still remains as a picturesque and indestructible ruin. The Augustinian theory of the Fall discovered the Stoic ideal man in Adam, and threw on all his descendants the shadow of his rebellion, a state of disaster from which a small minority were emancipated to the freedom of the City of God. It embodied a new application of the aristocratic principle of antiquity to the grouping of human life, an application much more expansive in its principle than the old, but just as absolute when its limits were reached. Men were made members of the Church by the sacrament of Baptism, as they had been made members of the City by being enrolled on the register of citizens; and apart from the Church they were nothing, just as apart from the City they had been nothing. *Man* was, indeed, older than the Church; he had known an ideal condition in which he had stood alone, above Nature, beyond Society, and only subordinate to God; but actual human beings owed all their value to their incorporation in a Society inheriting from the past the boundless claims of the State, conferring the same inestimable privileges, and therefore necessarily adhering to the same inexorable principle of exclusion. The enclosure which took in Greek and barbarian, bond and free, seemed to be one which had practically no limit, yet all which revolts us in what we know as Calvinism, and should more truly entitle Augustinianism, is but a transference of the earthly state to the Heavenly. The Church everywhere inherited the limitations of the City. The traditions of Rome had as

their main object to supply, with their pictures of patriotic devotion, reproach or warning for the less loyal citizen of the heavenly Jerusalem.<sup>1</sup> The unshaken fidelity of Regulus, the stern simplicity of Cincinnatus, the heroic fortitude which triumphed over parental fondness and anticipated in the person of Torquatus or Brutus the denunciation, "Whoever loveth son or daughter more than me is unworthy of me"—all this was in parable the ideal history of the Church. The narrative of what had happened was an injunction as to what should happen. Even details which suggest no such typical significance to our minds, the "Asylum" of Romulus (where a few robbers, secured by impunity, formed the origin of the almost immortal State), prefigured that Divine mercy which in Christ should deliver from the bondage of Sin to the hope of Righteousness. "For our sakes this was written;" yes, and done also. In the eyes of Augustine, the majesty of Rome had little value but as a symbolic rehearsal of the victory of the Church, and the Church could no more expand to include Humanity than the City could.

The work containing this fantastic exegesis of Roman history was undertaken to refute an opinion common at the time among Pagans, that the sack of Rome by the Goths was the consequence of the abandonment of the ancient religion for Christianity. The course of history of itself so little tended to exhibit the Church as the ideal State, that Augustine was reduced almost to forget the vast calamities of the actual State after its alliance with the Church. For him, as Greek implied Barbarian, and the empress city implied a population of slaves, so the City of God must imply a world given over to the powers of Evil. The antithesis carried on the one great contrast of the ancient world between freedom and slavery. Humanity was in bondage, Christ was the liberator; but the deliverance was into an altogether exceptional condition; the natural condition

and in-  
her ts its  
exclusive-  
ness.

<sup>1</sup> *De Civitate Dei, passim.*

was that of slavery to Evil. The first man, in his original condition, stood apart from all his sons, as the freeman from the slave; he had chosen bondage for himself, and therefore, of course, for his posterity. This was the natural condition of humanity, apart from Redemption. The commonwealth was no longer sacred. What was sacred was something taken out of it—something removed from the secular enclosure of national life, and transferred, as it were, from the wreck to the lifeboat. The ruin of the City of man was the emancipation of the City of God.

The Augustinian monk and the Platonic guardian.

Thus contemplated, the Augustinian ideal, which became the mediæval ideal, appears utterly opposed to that of classic antiquity. Yet in truth they were closely allied: we might from some points of view regard the mediæval ideal as the classical ideal with the Church substituted for the City. A comparison of the *Divine State* of Augustine with the *Republic* of Plato reveals a strong common element in both. Each throws the shadow of inferiority on all that is symbolised by the domestic hearth, on all private relation, and above all on the relation of man and woman. Each focuses its attention on an exceptional class, and sterilises the soil of ordinary goodness. Domestic life, with all that it implies, was equally to be banished from both. The guardian was not to know his own children; the monk was not to have any children. In both cases equally the common mass of humanity was to be indulged with the ordinary relations that make up the *home*; in both, the saints were called upon to renounce them, to live a life superior to that of the common herd. Parental and conjugal love were, in their case, to cease to exist; in one case the extinction was absolute, for during many centuries the holiest men of Europe left no posterity. The holiest men in Plato's *Republic* would have been obliged to leave a posterity, it is true; but as they would not have been permitted to know their own children, or the women who bore them, the love of man to woman, of



parent to child, was proscribed in each case with equal rigour. In each the ties of kindred were to be stripped of the sanctities of duty, and the object of entire devotion was to be invisible. The Augustinian saint, an actual human being, stood aside from the path of inheritance, and left it to the ruffian and the sot to bequeath his evil tendency to his country for ever. The Platonic guardian never existed, but, as far as he was a model, the result was in the same direction. In the one case the man belonged to the State, in the other to the Church; in both cases men ceased to belong to the Family. The moral nature was a mutilated one. That twofold life, in which man and woman became one, was in both a mere concession to the ordinary unblessed animal desires of the common herd, and all the affections and virtues which find their root on this soil were smitten with the blight of moral contempt.

Man needs Divine sympathy in all his ideals. If the Divine act of Creation was a blunder; if the Creation was either the result of, or a mere prelude to, the Fall of spiritual beings, then all impulse in man which tends towards the continuance of Creation is mistaken likewise. Augustine believed that all God's acts were holy, and that therefore the Creation was holy. He believed this firmly, but he did not teach it. His system exhibited Creation as a vast blunder, an exercise of mischievous activity far beyond that of any Gnostic Demiurgus; and if Creation be an error, Procreation must be a crime. This consequence of his theology was felt at first by honest thinkers who perished as obscure rebels against the truth, and were forgotten. Some there were in the days of Augustine who dared to regard human nature as the work of God, human impulse as His gift; who protested against a scheme which left the ultimate victory, in the battle of Good and Evil, on the side of the Devil. However the justice of God and man might differ, such objectors urged, it was

Faint echo  
of the  
protest of  
humanity

not in a narrower scope for the Divine. What would be injustice in man could not be converted into justice in God by labelling it occult justice, and if obscure and isolated texts from St. Paul could be produced seeming to assert that it might, they form a less secure basis of belief than the deep-rooted confidence that He is good in the same sense as His creature is. Such arguments come to our ears with the stamp of thought almost effaced by the friction of long usage; the doctrine against which they are a protest, whatever else might be said against it, would at least bring fewer associations of triteness to us. It was very different in the age of Augustine. We venture to speak of those who held these views in the plural, but as a matter of fact we only know of one such thinker, and our knowledge of Julian, the disciple of Pelagius, is entirely due to the quotations made by Augustine in the work of refutation<sup>1</sup> which occupied the last months of his life. Amid the terrors of the Vandal siege and the weakness of mortal disorder, the great Doctor pursued his life work of battling for what he felt the Truth, and laid down the pen only at the summons of Death. He has given his opponent a share in his own literary immortality, and perhaps to some of his readers his citations from Julian have been felt the most interesting passages in the ponderous tomes enclosing his writings. They speak of a recoil from a hard and narrow system which makes the name of Christianity hateful to one who focuses his attention upon it, and seem, in such a mood, like the first opening foliage after a long and bitter winter. Or rather, we must say, the interpolation of a genial week in such a winter, forcing the buds into a premature and delusive life only to nip them with more biting frost, and crush the opening hope in an icy death.

<sup>1</sup> *Opus Imperfectum contra Julianum Pelagianum*, a work which would give the reader all he need know of the system of Augustine for the object of these pages.

A profound suspicion of those impulses by which man becomes a creator of new life—an arduous effort after that life which knows nothing of the blending of the spiritual and the material, an abandonment of the natural human life to irreligious men, leaving the world to be peopled by their descendants—such was the legacy of Manichæanism to its triumphant foe. Manichæans were persecuted, but Manichæanism prevailed. Christians would not allow that the Fall was a superhuman event anterior to the Creation, but they more and more transfigured the simple story of Genesis with supernatural issues, and made the actual constitution of things a consequence of the Fall. They believed that God made the world, but they behaved as if it were made by a blundering Demiurgus; their aspirations, their condemnations, would have gained coherence and justification if they had been allied with an intellectual scheme which recognised it as a disaster that Spirits ever entered on their tenements of clay. The eternal distinction of spiritual men from all others became more and more a canon of Christian orthodoxy; and although it was a heresy to believe in an embodied Spirit of Nature separated from God, and interposing his organising power between the sullyng world of Matter and the Divine purity, it was more and more the teaching of Christian orthodoxy that all the instincts of Nature were allied with Evil.

Mani-  
chæism in  
Chris-  
tianity.

How eagerly, after centuries of this frost, must the human spirit have turned to the sunshine of Greece and Rome, when it broke anew through the clouds! All that is extravagant in the Renaissance is explained when we see what had gone before. Men had been taught for hundreds of years that a man's life was the lower life; they suddenly found themselves in contact with a literature which exhibited it as the only life. They had been taught to look upon Nature as something Evil; they saw it suddenly displayed as something Divine. All impulse had been

The  
revival of  
Greece.

allied with Sin; all impulse was now shown as portrayed in glorious art, and of itself the creator of a noble world rich in beauty and variety, and needing no redemption. We think of science and literature as hostile, but, though foes now, they were nursed in one cradle. The release from one cramped, unnatural attitude set free the Spirit of man to enter for the first time into the study of Nature, in all its aspects—nature in man, and nature in the world. Wearied with the keen knife-edge antithesis of Truth and Error, men turned with rapture to the gentle slope of gradation that severs Knowledge from Ignorance. Men looked on the world with new eyes, "And lo! Creation widened to man's view." The Universe expanded. Earth lost her central place, but found herself one of many earths; the sister worlds seemed to inscribe the nightly skies with their lesson of the heavenly in the earthly. For as Heaven disappeared from the vault above, it reappeared, in some sense, on earth. This dark earth became a star, taking its place in the bright choir that had seemed the ideal home of purified spirits. At the same time its own expanse widened, new realms opened in the West, man's home became a boundless estate for the expanding human race. Man entered on a double inheritance—new worlds in the Heavens, new lands beyond the seas. A boundless universe opened upon him on every side, to explore with eye or mind, and unexpected aid sprang up in every quarter. Even the weapons of mutual slaughter afforded patterns of the heavenly movements, while a new vehicle for the record of thought gave thought rapidity. Man entered upon the rehabilitation of Nature. His home was no longer overshadowed by the recollection of a pristine crime. It was a glorious palace, and its inhabitants must be a regal race.

The trans-  
figuration  
of Earth.

It is by no fanciful association that we may see in the new astronomy a type of the development of thought by which the life of man became vivid, various, dramatic.

"Heaven and Earth" was originally a description of the ideal Universe. When we turn to the poem of Dante, and mark the prosaic, consistent literalness with which he conceived the material framework of his imaginative creation, we realise that he was not building up a new universe to suit his poetry, but merely giving definiteness to the ordinary and familiar conceptions of his contemporaries. The world was all, so to speak, laid out to fit the drama of Judgment. Heaven was above our head; Hell might well be below our feet; the Earth itself, the centre of the Universe, had nothing in common with

"The wandering fires which moved  
In mystic dance, not without song."

When Galileo and Newton had forced the world to recognise that Heaven, if it was anywhere, was everywhere, morals took a new direction. The antithesis of Heaven and Earth vanished from the inward as well as from the outward world. Human nature became interesting for its own sake. The stress and strain of a conflict between the powers of darkness and of light vanished, to make way for the development of various aims, of many-sided feelings, of hopes in which there was no edge of terror, of interests which, instead of merely emphasising the common attitude of different spirits to the Eternal, brought out and stimulated their differences, and developed all that was individual, all that was specific, in each.

If any one doubt the connection of this new interest in character with the new interest in science, let him turn to Bacon's Essays. There he will find an attention to the specific tendencies of the human mind, apart from all preconceived ideas of what that inquiring glance should discern, which is the true attitude for the investigator of Nature. "A mixture of a lie doth ever add pleasure." "There is no passion in the mind of man so weak but

Return of  
Greek spirit  
of variety



it mates and masters the fear of death." "Chaste women are often proud and froward, as presuming on the merit of their chastity." "Men of noble birth are noted to be envious towards new men when they rise, for the distance is altered, and it is like a deceit of the eye, that when others come on they think themselves go back." "The wiser sort of great persons bring in ever upon the stage somebody upon whom to derive the envy that would come upon themselves." That is criticism of character in the spirit of the observer of Nature. Men are regarded not as righteous or wicked, but as formed by circumstance, as the result of natural law. Or turn to what is perhaps a better expression of the same kind of detachment in the egotism of Montaigne—"Je suis des plus exempts de cette passion" (la tristesse) "et ne l'ayme ni l'estime, quoique le monde ayt entrepris de l'honorer de faveur particulière." "J'ay une merveilleuse lascheté vers la miséricorde." "Certes je puis aysément oublier." "Je ne me tiens pas biens en ma disposition : le hasard a plus de droict que moi." When we turn to such sentences as this fresh from the Confessions of Augustine we feel not that we have exchanged the biography of a saint for that of a sinner, or (to take an opposite point of view) that of a bigot for that of a liberal, but simply that we have made a return from the spirit of dogma towards the spirit of drama. We have returned to the Greek sense of variety; we have lost all remembrance of a great division-line separating the travellers to Heaven or Hell. We are already in the modern world of secular, scientific interest; we observe moral tendencies as facts just like any other facts; they have lost their overwhelming significance as hints of an eternal distinction. It is difficult for us to realise that this ever came upon the world as a new thing. It is the spirit of art at all periods of the world's history, and it is also the spirit of science. But as a broad, catholic influence it came upon the world in the breath of the

Renaissance, and buried germs of life felt the influence and rushed into the genial air. In this sunshine of a new life sprang up the luxuriant and various vegetation of modern literature—literature as it is impressed with the revival of classical life, as it bears still the character given it by the rebound from a gloomy and mutilated theology. The modern drama commemorates the reawakening of individual human interests after their long sleep, the sudden influx of life into the withered boughs that had felt the frost of the long winter. The love of woman changes from the centre of human temptation to the centre of human interest. A halo of romance succeeds a shadow of sin. Human passion appears in connection with whatever is stately, whatever is vigorous, whatever is pure. Man's spirit is no longer a battlefield for the contending forces of Heaven and Hell. It is a rich and varied landscape, full of beauty, full of interest; its qualities cannot be tabulated under antithetic heads of Good and Evil; they are various, and interesting for their own sake. Once more, as to the Greek, Nature becomes sacred; her laws succeed her deities. Gravitation binds the world in a golden chain; the realm of Law which it symbolises and encloses prepares men's minds, satisfied with all the wealth and variety contained therein, to cease from all striving towards that which lies above and beyond it.

The line of development here indicated was not followed out unbroken to our own day; if we were to keep it so we should have to ignore the Reformation. Protestantism is a revival of Augustinianism; though Augustine was the great Doctor of the Roman Church, his true successor is Luther. That crisis in the history of a man which we call Conversion—a crisis which we may find in the lives of some men who care nothing for religion—is not a natural, not at least an inevitable, incident in the life of a member of a Church. The fact of a relation and the consciousness of a relation are indeed two things, and the


Protestant-  
ism a recoil  
from the  
Renaiss-  
sance

fact that when Augustine lived, Baptism was still an expression of individual conviction, so that the new member of the Church was not an unconscious babe, but a man or woman desirous to enter its fold—this fact prevented, at this time, any discernment of the inchoate divergence between two systems which were not logically irreconcilable. But the Church which sets her seal on every unconscious infant demands no spiritual crisis as the pledge of membership, and cannot emphasise the emotion which testifies to a new perception. The doctrine that man is justified by faith—that an inward emotion sets each individual in his right place, and that this is a transaction between the soul and God—this view is not obviously harmonious with the ideal of a Catholic Church. Catholicism had developed the corporate element in Augustinianism; Protestantism went back to its individual element. These two were harmonious in the mind of Augustine, but they diverged with the progress of the ages, and the two divisions of Christendom have divided the two elements between them. Protestantism, therefore, which is often regarded as a step forward in the progress from the age of undoubting faith to the age of critical reason, was in reality an excursion away from the path. It gave new vitality to the doctrine of the Fall. That doctrine, though accepted by the Catholic Church, is not a distinctively Catholic belief. We find scarcely a trace of it in the poem of Dante, where our first father, with a few selected spirits alone of those who knew not Christ, is to be found in Paradise. The Catholic Church remembered only that man was the member of an organism; she never taught that man must in his own history reverse the part of Adam. Protestantism took up this lesson, and gave emphasis to the doctrine of the Fall by the doctrine of individual Redemption. But Protestant and Catholic, deadly foes as they were, might have joined hands against the Renaissance, if they could have under-

stood the path of history. A new epoch was at hand, in which the struggle should be transferred to other issues than those which divided Protestants from Catholics. The French Revolution took up the lesson of the Renaissance. It received its heritage, not from men who dethroned an infallible Church to make way for an infallible book, but from men who taught that nothing was infallible but the spirit of universal humanity. It proclaimed the sanctity of Nature. It repudiates the doctrine of the Fall. The ideal of Democracy, started by the American and made emphatic by the French Revolution, is the doctrine of Original Sin inverted. Man's nature is corrupt, said Augustine; education should be the victory over Nature. Man's nature is holy, said Rousseau; education should be the victory over all that is artificial. The Rights of Man, the Goddess of Reason, the worship of Humanity—all are the sonorous, the emphatic, the passionate unsaying of the doctrine of Original Sin, the Fall of Man, the Evil of Nature. Our own time has seen this process completed. The Darwinian theory of the survival of the fittest and the origin of humanity by natural selection has bound the scientific and the moral members of this new development into a complete whole. Till the Renaissance, Nature had been the invading, disturbing influence in Creation; she is now enthroned as the Creator.

We underrate the power of reaction in thought. We seldom give an adequate place to that element in all assertion which is truly denial. God, says the Indian sage, is only to be described by No, No. That is, so many of man's thoughts of God are unworthy, that the true doctrine concerning Him is largely made up of protest. The "No No" may be heard in every earnest doctrine. How much of modern science is made up of it we are hardly yet able to appreciate. The men who give attention to Nature, as to something Divine, may be even ignorant that there was a time when Nature was traduced as

something almost Satanic; but they are none the less protestants against that belief. The conscious participation in thought and feeling granted to every son of man is but a small part of that which he truly is. Far below the stratum of consciousness in each one of us lie the unsounded depths of a heritage we can as little abjure as discern. In some mysterious thrill, in some strange unintelligible foreboding, in some vague unexplained ecstasy of hope, the struggles of our fathers make themselves felt in our hearts. And what for a thousand years men believed leaves its record for centuries in a protest after it has ceased to exist as a creed. The doctrine owes all its distinctness to what it has overthrown, even when that is, in the mind of the teacher, utterly forgotten. We are describing a process hardly yet concluded. The Science of the late nineteenth century stood towards Time as the Science of the Renaissance stood towards Space. As the astronomers of the seventeenth century, in destroying the old cosmogony of the earth below and the heavens above, discovered a new star in this seeming dark earth, so the men of Science of the nineteenth have discovered in the seemingly undivine processes of all growth the work of the Creator. The six days of Creation have expanded to take in the course of all the years, as the realm of Heaven expanded to take in the orb that holds all that is known of life. On the side of Science the transition is complete, but its influence is still marked by the momentum of recoil, and the balance of opposite forces has yet to come.





## CHAPTER X

### MALE AND FEMALE CREATED HE THEM

THE review here concluded has failed of its purpose if the aspirations it records exhibit no relation to the moral life of our day, and a day that is to come. In the successive aims which make up the history of thought can we trace any moral evolution pointing to an ideal which may be recognised by all?

A review of historic ideals should prepare a consideration of the human ideal.

Such an ideal, we must recognise at the outset of our search for it, will differ vitally from all ideals of the past. The spirit which grouped and organised the ancient world, and also the mediæval world, was a selective spirit. Who should and who should not be an Athenian or a Roman citizen was a question for the State to decide, and the group thus created, enclosing the only persons endowed with rights, was fenced against expansion. Who should and who should not be a member of the mediæval Nation in the full sense of the word was a question which the Church claimed the right to decide, and her standards were rigidly exclusive. The spirit which groups and organises the modern world, on the other hand, is a collective spirit. The Nation can never, with a whole heart, set up any permanent distinction between her children and her mere subjects. Such a distinction, if accepted in the exigencies of practical government, has always a provisional and uncertain character, and is never avowed without reluctance. Any seeming exception to this inclusive tendency, such as we are forced to recognise in the case of the coloured races, betrays by its occasional violence that it is a survival from outgrown moral condi-

The human ideal must be one for all human beings.

tions, owning no fellowship with anything that aims at progress. The true Nation is an expansive unity. Even more is the true Church. That conception of a final separation between the lost and the saved, which was for so long woven in with the teaching of Christianity, is in our time discarded for ever. In the future, whatever is a hope for any division of mankind must become a hope for all.

The human  
race  
awakened  
late to the  
duty of in-  
clusiveness.

The fact that this is felt now, and was not felt in the past, is often misinterpreted. If we endeavour to track the inclusive spirit from a remote past, we discover that the change of moral attitude from one which accepts an absolute limit on sympathy to one which assumes an indefinite expansiveness of sympathy is no result of a continuous development, but rather an event analogous to that which, in the case of an individual, we speak of as a conversion. Such a change in an individual career is constantly supposed more sudden than it was. With a race the exaggeration is the other way. By the foreshortening of history the inclusive spirit, discernible as a growing influence through the six or seven generations preceding our own, has been thrown back upon the vista of past ages, where it has no real place; to an attentive gaze, indeed, the later ideal will constantly be found more restrictive than its predecessor. The City itself narrowed its basis with the progress of its growth. The gleam of expansive feeling intervening between the exclusiveness of the City and the exclusiveness of the Church was premature and sterile. The Church carried on and even intensified the exclusiveness of the City, for it selected individuals where the City included families, and where its predecessor had been merely ruthless, it was also inquisitorial. The heretic in Spain would have envied the alien at Athens. So again we may say, in an important sense, that Protestantism was narrower than Catholicism; it stirred up inquiry, and penalised the inevitable result. The Reformation brought a check to the Renaissance. Erasmus had no

fiercer antagonist than Luther. Spiritual democracy -the sense of an indefeasible claim on human sympathy in every human being—is in any vital sense a thing of yesterday. The conviction that it is nevertheless a thing no future moral revolution can destroy is not an inference from the experience of the race; that would of itself rather tend to shake such a conviction. It is the certainty of the waker that he is not dreaming. We know that whatsoever exclusion may be necessary in the interests of all, the spirit of exclusion is henceforth the ally of selfishness alone. It cannot again join hands, as it has in the past, with aspiration, with concentrated purpose, with any ideal whatever.

But the spirit of inclusion must be confessed, in one respect, inferior to the spirit of exclusion—it supplies no permanent aim. Ancient liberty meant incorporation in an organic whole. Modern liberty means the removal of all that fetters choice and impedes action. It has proceeded so far in this process that we now see it at leisure to turn its combative energies against things rather than persons; and thus extended it provides objects in which good and earnest men, of every religion and of no religion, may join with whole-hearted zeal, objects so satisfying to a large part of human nature that none other are needed for the time. For a time so long that men do not see beyond it, and thus fail to recognise that the unanimity inspired by such aims is wholly due to the fact that they are negative. We desire that all shall share the good, but what is the good that all may share? To find the evening add to the morning's store of ascertained truth—of discovered beauty—of purposed achievement? To feel the circle of the heart expand, its glow increase, its atmosphere grow clear? Or, on the other hand, to enjoy, without any element of weariness or reaction, the pleasures of the chase, the excitements of the wine-cup, the varied delights of the flesh? None of these aims are universal; the promise of any would leave the

A positive aim and an exclusive group have disappeared together

desires of a large number of human beings unsatisfied. We all want to escape pain, but when we come to positive desire, the proverb that one man's meat is another man's poison gives the experience of mankind.

The ideal which is to dominate the future must include the aspirations of the past.

If modern democracy has not helped us towards an ideal, it is perhaps because, with all its hatred of limitation, it is still too narrow. As the City ignored the aims of the alien and the slave, as the Church opposed the beliefs of the heretic and the pagan, so the democracy of to-day ignores the aims and beliefs of those myriads whom we call the dead. It is severe on those who take account of the beliefs only of their own country, but refuses to take account of any beliefs except those of its own age. The human ideal recognises no such limitations. It must inherit and develop the legacy of the past. It must include the views of remote ages as well as of remote countries. Whatever is true in Indian Pantheism, in Persian Dualism, in the rhythmic moral balance of Greece, in Roman reverence for law, in those searchings after some solution of the problem of Evil which formed the bridge between the classical and the Christian world, and in all those Christian systems which "have their day and cease to be"—all this must be incorporated in any ideal which is to represent the aspirations of humanity. The selective spirit of the past must itself find a place side by side with the collective spirit of the present. With regard to persons we have seen that this is impossible. If we can attain the antique unity of the City-State only at the price of its indifference to the slave and the alien, then that unity must go. However numerous the individuals who, in our day, might contemplate a class devoid of rights with Roman or Athenian indifference, we should now find in their ranks no binding power. They embodied the spirit of the City; the spirit of a Nation repudiates them. It must expand or die. The crystal stage is past; we have attained the upward growth, the variety, the irregularity of plant life, with its incompleteness, and all its failures.



We may apply to the contrast of the City and the Nation the expression of a poet of our own time—

Contrast  
of the  
complete  
and the  
incomplete  
ideals.

"This low man seeks a little thing to do,  
Sees it and does it;  
This high man, with a great thing to pursue,  
Dies ere he knows it."

The generations of modern life pass away before they have grasped the problems which yet they leave to their successors nearer solution than they received them. The generations of ancient life contemplated simpler problems and came nearer solving them. In no arrogant spirit we may contrast the two as the high man and the low man, for unless we may look upon the progress of Society as a continual ascent we have no hope for ourselves, and no real gratitude to those who belonged to the early world. They exhibited completely and distinctly the bonds of a rational and consistent ideal of 'privilege, what we exhibit is chiefly the errors and blunders of men groping after a hidden ideal. In such a search we cannot afford to neglect the aims of those who have gone before us.

The evolution of the moral life, we have seen, passes in throbs of antagonism from race to race. The Indian sees all being as the expression of one vast Unity, and abhors the "pairs of opposites"; the Persian protests against the confusion of Good with Evil, and finds everywhere a conflict between two opposing principles. The process of alternation is still continuous, but it is not again so simple. Antagonism is never a blank recoil. No stage of thought, in the progress of humanity, can be a mere unsaying of what has gone before. The Persian Dualism held some hint of an ultimate Unity which, as the goal of all existence, must have been in some sense its starting point. And then again, when the rich variety of the artist people was exchanged for the monotony of the

We need to  
rediscover  
the lost  
principle  
of union.



world's lawgivers, there was yet a sort of escape from that monotony in the influence which made of Rome the mediator of the nations, enclosing in its hard framework the variety of the Greek world. When the consciousness of the race passed from the conviction that the State was a unity, to the double conviction that the individual is a unity, and that the human race is a unity, it made an advance which could never again be lost. Unsuspected by the greatest intellects of the old world, it is unquestioned by average intelligence in the new. Man to the old world was a mere fragment of the Republic. To the modern world the starting point of thought has been the individual man. No greater revolution ever moved the world of thought than that which effected this change in its moral unit; it has needed nearly two thousand years to exhibit the morality of the "Self" as the classic world exhibited the morality of the Citizen. We cannot say that that evolution is yet complete, but we seem to have reached a stage when we need to grope after some element of discarded truth.

Human progress, we have said, may be mapped out as the zigzag path up a mountain. It turns to the right, and returns to the left, but not to its original level. Antagonism seems essential to progress; we can hardly imagine what vigorous assertion would be if it did not embody latent denial, but denial itself always prepares a counter denial. Truth must thus be regarded rather as a process than a statement, rather a movement than a view from any single position. The swing of the pendulum symbolises the natural impulse of impatient thought, the pattern of spiritual discovery must be sought in the arduous and unceasing change of direction which leads to all the loftiest peaks of earth.

Light,  
mortal and  
physical,  
subject to  
the same  
law.

The discernment that Truth is movement is one as important for the moral world as the discernment that light is movement is for the scientific world. If there

be a law common to the world without and the world within, it is this which in our day has taken such wide extension, and shown us that which makes all else visible as itself the rush hither and thither of invisible atoms, swaying in rhythmic balance. The scientific interpretation of Light gives a clue to the meaning of Truth, as it is mirrored in human minds. The balanced swing which gives us the vision of the outward world represents to us that mental attitude by which we discern the world within: pause, immobility, is unknown to either region. The history of thought is a continual exhibition of the incapacity of the human intellect to express in any single statement more than half of a truth. Every perplexity which has deeply stirred the human heart seems to need two opposite answers; and for finite beings Truth seems to involve contradiction between them. We spring from any single vision to one supplying a diverse element of thought; there is no conviction that will not become error if, in our attention to it, we stiffen into immobility and lose the palpitating throb, which is indeed the very pulse of mental life.

We may say, speaking very broadly, that this immobility was the error of the past. Unquestionably it was the error both of what we call Antiquity and of orthodox Christendom. They both looked upon Truth as something stationary. The greatest thinkers of the early world lived when political life revealed the movement of Evolution at least as clearly as it has ever been seen in the modern world. No later period could be mentioned fuller of significance in this direction than the age of Aristotle, yet that greatest of all political thinkers saw nothing of it. The like error with regard to the "faith once delivered to the saints" has in the Christian world been even a growing influence, for it was strongest in Protestantism. The error of the Present comes near to inverting the error of the Past. It sees in all thought

The Past  
failed to  
recognise  
its move-  
ment the  
Present  
fails to  
recognise  
its rhythm.

*mere* movement—movement in its simplest form, in a right line onwards for ever. It regards the element of return as simple and injurious reaction. It knows nothing of that turn backwards and upwards at once which leads to the heights of Truth as of all others. As an earlier age needed to learn that Truth is movement, so does our own need to discover that Truth is rhythmic.

Distinction  
of collective  
and selec-  
tive Truth  
in the  
present and  
the past.

The antithetic truths towards which Morality has alternately directed itself in the long ascent are those which an effort has been made to define as the goals respectively of the collective and the selective spirits. We see the antagonism between them most clearly in the earliest religions contemplated here. Indian Pantheism is as clear an exhibition of the expansive, all-embracing spirit as Persian Dualism is of that narrowing and deepening influence which contemplates all human impulse from the watershed of Right and Wrong. History does not supply later examples with equal clearness. Greece is as selective as Persia; the home of the City-State, the fostering nurse of the selective spirit on political ground; but its selectiveness is non-moral, the Artist people exchanges the battle of Good and Evil for the gymnastic of opposite truths, and loses the contrast of light and darkness in the balance of light and shade. Rome is as collective as India, it seeks everywhere to establish the rule of Law; but its collectiveness is inhuman, and the governing people shatter the City-State as they transform it to an Empire, while they at the same time trample on the impulses which would introduce and prepare the Nation. Perhaps we may say that when we have once quitted the primal antagonism of Pantheism and Dualism we do not regain it in the same distinctness until a late period in modern history, when Pantheism emerges as the spirit of Science; while its antithetic truth, more difficult to name, takes in the whole range of those ideas without which History would be a meaningless dream.

As to the antagonism of Science to every form of Dualism there is no question. Equally with Indian Pantheism does it abhor the "pairs of opposites." It avoids the selectiveness of Literature; for its vision no fact is insignificant. A trifle may make a revolution in its theories. A small apparent inaccuracy has proved the source of important astronomic discovery. It avoids the selectiveness of Art; for its vision no fact is repulsive. The present theory of Evolution, with its spectacle of a truceless war and a ruthless destructiveness in Nature, is nothing more than a generalised statement of truths from which all lovers of Nature would gladly avert their attention. But, above all, Science avoids the selectiveness of Morality. To the question,—Is it better to lead what is called a pure life, or to satisfy every natural instinct?—the Scientific Spirit can only answer, 'Try both, and you gain the power to make a choice. The Moral Spirit says, 'Try both, and you lose the power to make a choice. There is no common ground here. Science is the study of what was, what is, the announcement of what shall be; it knows of no imperative. The idea that experiment would diminish the power of a true judgment concerning the things judged is unintelligible to it. The idea of something that being existent must be treated for some purposes as non-existent is abhorrent to it. When we know a man's preferences we know all about him of which Science can take cognisance. It can exhibit the dangers of intoxication to health, but if he prefer intoxication to health it cannot object that a condition in which he is a danger to others is no legitimate object of choice. The words "You ought" bear no translation into the language of Science. The whole world of Nature affords not a single pattern for the conception of Duty.

Hegel has called Spirit the Other of Nature; if this be true, there must be a knowledge which is the Other of Science. The truth sought by the one ends where the truth

In the present this distinction is represented by that between Science and Morality.

The fundamental antithesis.

sought by the other begins, and their several methods are not only different but opposite. Scientific truth needs nothing in its disciple but intellect and attention. The other truth demands the co-operation of something else within the man before it can be discerned; and this something else is not only what Science lacks, but what it forbids. When we say, "Every particle of matter attracts every other with a force diminishing as the square of the distance," we make a statement where language conveys the fact fully and adequately. The worst and best of men, if equally intelligent, mean exactly the same thing when they pronounce the words; the knowledge can be transferred to any mind that will listen to the proofs. Doubt, here intelligently worked out, is the means of fuller certainty. But when we say, "It is better to be the injured than the injurer," we express a truth which every one who holds it feels himself forbidden to investigate, otherwise than by always acting as if it were true. Let him test it by experiment, and the words conveying it will grow meaningless. Let him test it by observation, and they will turn to monstrous falsehood.

No common language for the two.

Where demonstration becomes impossible, there scientific truth ends. Where demonstration becomes impossible, there the deeper truth begins. Scientific truth can be transferred from one mind to another as water is poured into a cup, the other truth must be approached and entered as a man enters a house. "This is true," on the lips of a scientific man, means "Experiment will prove it;" or if, as in astronomy, experiment is impossible, then some other kind of evidence will prove it to any mind capable of receiving evidence. "This is true," when spoken of spiritual truth, means "Stand where I stand and you will see what I see." The very form of expression is or should be different. Science can say of every ascertained decision, "*It* is certain." When all authoritative persons have listened to the evidence the case is at an end, the verdict is given.



The Other of Science never affords that external and transferable certainty which can adhere to words; the truth it opens is one of which a man must say, "*I am certain.*" The communicable certainty is definite in amount. In sickness and in health, in solitude and in company, men mean the same thing when they say the sun is the centre of our system. This very permanence of content is a part of its proof. We measure it, estimate it accurately, know exactly how much we mean by it. The incommunicable certainty being of something man cannot grasp, but which encompasses him, is infinitely various in its aspect. It is one thing in moments of vigorous health when the body makes no claim on the spirit, another in dark dim hours when nothing seems real but miserable sensation. It is one thing when a man can say, as a member of a Church, "We are certain;" another thing when he must say, as a heretic or a solitary believer, "*I am certain.*" Above all, it differs from scientific certainty in the fact that it can be forgotten. A mature and sane mind converted from a geocentric to a heliocentric view of the universe could never forget the abandoned belief in a central world and a wandering sun; but "*Lorsqu'on n'aime plus on ne se souvient pas d'avoir aimé*" is as true of Faith as of Love.

The antagonism between communicable and incommunicable truth is a law belonging to the constitution of the spiritual Universe. The hostility of their votaries is an incident due to the presumption of fallible men. Science is constantly expanding its area, but never changes its method. The physicist or chemist, as each enters a higher sphere, still retains the same impartial attitude to all fact, the same refusal (on any other ground than that of relevance) to make any selection in the objects submitted to him. He continues in the path of experiment, of verification throughout his whole course, and if ever he encounters the spirit which refuses experiment, which shrinks from verification, he is either aware of the presence of an invader, or is an invader

Faith intrudes on the ground of Science.

himself. On his own ground he knows the selective spirit as prejudice, as dogmatism, as the contrary of every mental equipment he seeks to bring with him to the task of research. This ground covers the whole realm of Time and Space, and whenever we make or dispute any assertion respecting events we must appeal to Science. The spirit of Faith claims no right to formulate or contradict any decision as to what has happened. While it sees events as illustration of truths independent of time, and so far inspires anticipations which themselves, to some extent, form a part of evidence, it is always ready to allow that an illustration of a profound truth may, as a statement of fact, prove inaccurate or even erroneous. Never can we name a date without entering on the domain to which the tests of Science are applicable. It makes no difference how dear to the heart of humanity be the belief that once in the world's history the grave gave up its dead; as we pronounce the word "once" we undertake attention to any criticism of our evidence which may prove the belief erroneous. So far as this attention has been withheld by men who would have given it to other narratives recording similar events, the spirit of Faith has intruded into a realm which it cannot enter without deserting its own principles. No consolatory force can be brought forward as an answer to logical difficulties. It is worse than futile to answer an appeal to the understanding by an appeal to the heart or the conscience. On the ground of event, of phenomenon, of circumstance, of anything that might be marked on a map or a chronological table, the spirit of Faith is an intruder on alien territory. It makes no difference how far back we go in the world's history, whether we go to the very beginning of the world's history. It is the province of Science to say what happened at one time or another, and so far as any such decision has been made a matter of Faith it has been decided on wrong grounds, and is true, if it be true, only by accident.

Time and Space limit the field of Science as well as that of Faith, only here the limits are inclusive instead of exclusive. "The creation of the universe began on a Monday morning and ended on a Saturday night" is a scientific statement, and Science, in declaring it to be erroneous, gave its verdict from the seat of authority. "Man must remain ignorant as to the existence of a Creator" is not a scientific statement, and men of Science, in formulating it, and borrowing the Greek equivalent for Ignorance as its title, spoke with no authority; they were in the position of Hamlet's mother when she answers his question, "Do you see nothing there?" "Nothing at all, yet all that is I see." She should have stopped at "Nothing at all." But because the error concerns incommunicable truth it remains uncorrected. The belief that there was once a time when Space was empty, and that then within a week of that time there was this marvellous Universe which we inhabit—this belief is one which we cannot imagine re-entering a rational mind. Science has exhibited its absurdity once for all. On the other hand, the belief that the Universe knows no Creator will probably exist in acute and intelligent minds as long as people speculate about such matters at all. Sometimes, in the future as in the past, it will probably eclipse the light of Heaven and darken the earth. Sometimes it will dwindle to the opinion of a few individuals, or even disappear altogether for a time. But Agnostics will never lack arguments, and their opponents will never gain power of demonstration. No one will ever say of scientific truth, "I have given time and energy to understand it, and I find there is nothing in it." But unquestionably this is what has been said of spiritual truth. The deeper truth is the hidden truth, and for the purposes of one who asks, "Is it worth while to dig this field on the chance of this hidden treasure of which we have no proof," the treasure which is not hid is better. Before he can, not only find, but

and Science  
on the  
ground of  
Faith

seek, the hidden treasure, he must change his desires, a possibility of which Science is ignorant.

Science  
knows no  
imperative.

Ignorance precludes denial no less than assertion; the opposite of knowledge is doubt, not disbelief. But doubt claims careful and neutral attention, the silence of passion and preference, the alertness of an unimpeded judgment; it is a rare and arduous state of mind. Denial, on the other hand, allies itself with eloquence, enlists emotion, satisfies that vivid and universal instinct which seeks completeness and effectiveness. Between these two the slope is so gentle at first, and so steep at last, that few can avoid the descent to what seems firm ground. And thus it happens that the antagonism of opposite truths passes into the strife of warring prejudices. Our whole mental nature being set to the rhythm of a mighty vibration wherein the faculties that own the dominion of Time and Space alternate with those which turn to Eternity, the mind is constantly called on to silence something within. When the scientific spirit confronts the world of Duty, it must silence its conviction that experiment is the gateway of Truth, that he only can judge who knows both sides. And also—what in truth is another side of the same surrender—it must silence the conviction that what is known to it as miracle is impossible, for here the command—to the coward, “Be brave”; to the sensual, “Be temperate”; to the hard-hearted and cruel, “Be loving”—implies the possibility of a continual miracle. If all man’s deeds are mere effects, if in the words of *Œdipus* they are all “suffered rather than done,” then the world of Duty does not exist, and morals are a mere branch of Science; Man, as a spirit, is commanded to rule his own being, his own character. Man, as an animal, is subject to the laws of Nature. To trace the frontier between these dissimilar realms in an individual case is what a wise man will rarely attempt, but neither will he allow the difficulty as to their common frontier to affect his opinion

as to their separate existence and diverse legislation. Is he discussing what happened? He seeks expert knowledge, he follows logical rule, he recognises at every step the jurisdiction of Science. Perhaps he brings predilections which Science cannot recognise, it may be that no evidence will convince him of the guilt of one whom twelve honest men have convicted of perjury or theft. But he acknowledges their procedure to be legitimate, he knows his own conviction to belong to the realm of incommunicable truth, and allows that the laws of evidence must be followed everywhere, so far as *then* and *there* are concerned. But introduce the word *ought*, and we find ourselves on another domain. When Science has catalogued the impulses of human nature, Conscience demands that some shall be treated as if they were not. "It is natural" is no answer to that within each man which says "Forbear." "It is strong," "Then let resistance be stronger;" "Its victory seems to me preferable to any experience I can substitute for it," "Then change your preferences." Who can translate that command into language intelligible to Science? It is easy to produce instances when men acting on the most conscientious motives have done what we must call wrong. Perhaps the immorality of Charles II. and his Court was not so disastrous to our country as George III.'s conscientious refusal to consent to what he thought the breach of his Coronation oath in granting Catholic Emancipation. We must, at all events, confess that a man of loose life and careless morals may be a better king than a faithful husband, an affectionate father, and a sincerely religious man. History is full of such perplexities; morality is not concerned to explain them. The experience of individuals repeats them every day. This generous forgiveness has done harm (as we must reckon harm) where a strong resentment would have supplied much needed discipline. That noble sacrifice, as far as human eye can see, has prevented a useful and



beneficent career. If the dominion of Conscience had to be justified by an explanation of such cases, the word would be as obsolete as *phlogiston*. That faculty in man which speaks to him through an imperative refuses to be discredited by unexplained exhibitions of disastrous result. It belongs to another order.

Natural  
law knows  
nothing  
of ends :  
Spiritual  
law nothing  
of means.

It is not that Science has nothing to say on this subject. The account of Duty, as comprehensive and elevated prudence, is an accurate transcript of its aspect on scientific ground; it is a shadow, related to the thing itself as a silhouette portrait to the original. The Truth in three dimensions, projected on a plane surface, takes this outline. Science cannot enter the realm of ends, and within the realm of means morality is nothing more than this. But this analysis brings out no contribution towards an explanation of that sense of obligation which makes the interests of the human race a directive impulse to one of its members; while it makes only a negative contribution to any knowledge of what the interests of the human race are. It has only one meagre fact to contribute to that result, viz., that every human being dislikes certain sensations. How to avoid these sensations is a question which it answers with much information, and so important is this information, so much can be done by its aid to break the chain in which these sensations hold all who are subject to them, so various are the ends men are then set free to pursue, that in an age of Science men have come to fancy that Science can supply these ends. It can set free the bodily frame to become a better servant to the spirit already cognisant of an aim, but it cannot produce one, even on the lowest plane. "There is an exhilaration in vigorous bodily exercise," "To me it is not worth the preliminary exertion;" "There is intense delight in the acquisition of knowledge," "I do not feel it;" "The best thing in the world is love," "I have tried it and found it too thorny." The collective

spirit must admit all these answers as facts just like any other facts. The aims of indolent, selfish, cold-hearted people are just as much facts as the aspirations of the saint or the hero, and they have a wider scope. Science certainly will do something to neutralise the harm done by low aims, but it can never undertake to supply high ones. That which we have called the Other of Science takes its start from the idea of a hierarchy of aim. It no more undertakes to explain the idea of Duty than the idea of Existence. The imperative is to it as simple as the indicative. "Thou shalt" is no less intelligible than "Thou art." It takes precedence of the idea of simple existence. It allows no man to say, "I am indolent, sensual, selfish; I can only act according to my nature"—a plea which Science finds unanswerable. The Other of Science answers it with the command, "Change your nature, act on the belief of something in yourself higher than nature." And for one who will not listen to that voice the idea of Duty must be accepted as a useful illusion, like the "protective resemblances" of Nature, by which some creature owes its survival to a resemblance to something that it is not.

Must we accept this as the last word on the long strife? Is all that can be elicited from this comparison of the antagonists the fact that it is possible to distinguish the realms of their separate jurisdiction? We close with an attempt to say the little that can be brought forward in answer to this question.

We have seen that no positive aim is universal. The highest enlist few, the broadest do not attract all. But we may say that one is general—the impulse that seeks unity. Most normal human beings desire to feel themselves in some form "members one of another." We seek oneness with our like; men are united by a common blood, a common nationality, a common interest, even a common occupation. But yet more do we seek oneness with our opposite. The strongest bond is not one of resemblance but of unalterable

Have they  
no common  
ground?

The  
strongest  
human  
desire  
typified by  
the love of  
sex

contrast. The closest bond which unites man with man is weak beside the bond which unites man with woman. That apprehension of needs and desires not our own which elsewhere is the conquest of virtue, is here the fruit of a satisfied instinct, and one which we share with the creatures beneath us. That emancipation from the fetters of self, which with regard to the many seems impossible, is with regard to an individual natural and ordinary. Surely the love of sex was given to human beings to emphasise the lesson that the true union is between opposites. Human beings are infinitely different, but for the most part their differences are variable and interchangeable: youth passes into age, and with that change come others which would, if we could see them in prevision, seem like a loss of identity. One difference is unalterable, and it is across this chasm that human beings are united as they are never united on either side of it. The bridge affords a basis of union which on the solid earth men seek in vain. An impulse wider than humanity creates a union between two beings whose bond is not a common set of characteristics, but one unalterably different. The lesson of our incompleteness, the fragmentary nature of each one of us alone, is enforced by the law which gives creative power to the union of male with female.

Shadow of  
this even  
on the  
material  
world.

The impulse which unites them, we have said, is wider than human nature. We might almost say it is wider than animal nature. Always and everywhere, in the outward or in the inward world, the bond of likeness is weak compared with the bond of unlikeness. Gravitation—the homogeneous attraction—arranges the masses, small or great, of the material world, and regulates their movements; it exists wherever matter exists; it binds the material world in a single whole. Chemical union—the heterogeneous attraction—exists only where different elements combine, and divides the material world in separate substances, each of which embody a far closer union than any other that exists in the material world. Its name of “elective affinity,” which

might as well, or perhaps better, be selective affinity, suggests a spiritual symbolism, and was indeed at its first introduction suspected as a relic of the mysticism of the alchemists. It is the bond which mere force is powerless to dissolve, and its dissolution does not merely diminish the original substance, but destroys it altogether. When that bond is broken which unites a branch to its parent tree, the loss is sensible but the tree remains, possibly disfigured and injured, but just as much a tree as it was before. When that bond is broken which unites hydrogen to oxygen the original unity is gone, and we have something quite different in its place. A fluid has disappeared, and we have three gases. Just so is it with human relations. A brother is separated from a brother as a branch is hewn from a tree, as alienated brothers they are brothers still. A wife is divorced from her husband as hydrogen is separated from water; the Family has disappeared, and we have two individuals in its place. What the union of heterogeneity gains in closeness, it loses in universality. A world without gravitation is inconceivable to us; a world without chemical affinity we conceive readily enough; we have no reason to think that amid the countless worlds around us some may not consist of elementary substances. A world without natural affection is almost as inconceivable as a world without gravity; a man unconscious of any uniting bond with his fellows is hardly a man. But a world without marriage is as conceivable as a world made of gold. We may say that it was conceived by the creator of the ideal Republic; for though Plato's citizens were to leave a posterity, they were to know nothing of what we mean by marriage. Here, as elsewhere, we may discover an illustration of the law that what is gained in intensity is lost in extension.

The contrast between the love of sex and every other love repeats the antithesis of Faith and Science. It is true that this contrast is exhibited primarily between all love and all knowledge—all human relation belongs to the order

Selective  
love rightly  
exclusive  
collective  
love rightly  
expansive

of Faith. We might speak of a faithful brother as well as a faithful wife, and the brotherly relation is stimulated by unlikeness, as the conjugal relation, on the other hand, is enriched by comradeship. But we more naturally keep the expression of *fidelity* for that relation which is directly and exclusively the product of Will: that relation of which the condition is fundamental and unalterable contrast, and to which alone is granted the privilege and responsibility of originating new life. To this relation the associations of fidelity must obviously be applicable in a special sense; here we find the origin of all other relation, here we must discern in some sense the focus of morality. Here love is altogether selective, and thus repeats, in contrast to all other love, that contrast between Science and Faith which, absolute as it is, we shall yet find recurrent, not merely dividing life and thought once for all, but repeating its polarity within every division, and rediscoverable as a fresh magnet within domains it has already assigned to either pole. Nowhere do we discover this recurrent antithesis more distinctly than in that which separates the love of sex from every other. The love of the brother loses its purity with its expansiveness. If it do not gladly share its privileges, if it see the father's welcome to the returning prodigal with grudge or resentment, the brotherly spirit is lacking. The love of the spouse loses its purity with its exclusiveness. If it be willing to share its privileges; if it can be lifted above the possibility of jealousy by anything but a sense of exclusive possession of its object, the conjugal spirit is lacking. The brotherly love recognises what is already in existence. It treads an appointed path, but it creates nothing. The selective love *par excellence* creates the bond to which it owes loyalty. While it is more natural than almost any other in the sense that it penetrates to a stratum of life below humanity, it yet may be said to belong to a supernatural order in the sense that it has



its root in the Will of Man, and that it partakes in the creative power of God. He has delegated to His creature His own power of saying—Let there be life; and the first opening towards this result is creative also. Selective love stands in alliance with man's Will, as collective love with his Knowledge.

We speak of central types, not of enclosing areas. The love of selection, in its special sense, is identical with the love of sex. Selective love has other fields of exercise, it finds its place in friendship, and in many forms of association. In fact the spirit of selection is a graduated influence applicable everywhere, and repeating its sifting process again and again. The Party, the Sect, the political or ecclesiastical association of every kind—all embody its principle, and exhibit its dangers; dangers seen most clearly where their absence is illegitimate. A pure and faithful selective love may prove a poisonous atmosphere for lofty aim and generous impulse; the bonds that centre in the domestic hearth may become the foes of justice, the allies of corruption, and the fostering influence to a vicarious selfishness more dangerous to the welfare of society than individual selfishness ever is. "Ces pures de familles sont capables de tout." When a man allows his care for wife and children to count as care for others, in the same way as his succour to a fellow-traveller is a part of his care for others, he multiplies unawares his own claims, and flatters himself that he has given much, when he has merely transferred something from his right hand to his left. The Family thus becomes a disguise in which selfishness invades the army of the virtues and paralyses their movements. It is natural that this should be the temptation of modern life. As the rights of Family life have been ignored, so they are unduly exalted; as they have been excluded from the precincts of sanctity, so they arrogate to themselves the very centre of that enclosure. From this point of view we may almost under-

Exclusive-  
ness, an  
attribute  
of the  
selective  
spirit in all  
its forms, is  
a danger to  
all

stand how the mediæval eclipse of family life might be a needed stage in national development. The selective love which should be the model and focus of any other becomes constantly its enemy. And the discernment of this danger has, with an enthusiast here and there, roused a protest against the principle of exclusion even in its citadel. But such freakish ebullitions may be almost ignored when we trace the progress of moral development. They are mere eddies on the stream testifying to the strength of its main current; both earnest thinkers and average men regard them rather as forms of temptation than as legitimate openings to thought. As to the proportion which this particular duty bears to other duties—as to the wisdom of that assumption by which *Morality*, when spoken of abstractedly, is generally applied to sexual morality alone, the assumption which would classify as “bad men” many faithful servants of the State and benefactors of humanity—there may be very different opinions. But as to the claim which is the foundation of sexual morality, the claim that the loyalty of husband or wife shall be exclusive, this probably would be asserted almost as strongly by those whose lives it would condemn as by those who would illustrate its possibility and its triumphant success.

The near-  
ness of  
opposites.

The antithesis we have striven to indicate as a clue to the true meaning of a Moral Ideal is too wide-reaching and too deeply penetrating to be adequately expressed in any pair of opposites known to language. When we speak of it as the antagonism of Science and Faith we include much fallacious association and exclude some important instances of its operation; but, on the whole, this seems the least inadequate description which familiar dialect can supply. If we speak of it as the spiritual meaning of sex we embark on a wide and dubious range of expression, and entangle ourselves in many difficulties, yet here, perhaps, we gain an answer to some. For here we catch a glimpse of that law of

recurrence in spiritual polarity which exhibits antagonism as the unresolved discord leading to the richest harmony.

The collective love—the love of kindred, of country, the love which recognises existing relation with all its claims and duties—this, we have said, is love related to Knowledge. The selective love—the love which creates the family, which brings into existence new duties, new claims, new lives, seems to stand in relation rather to Will than Knowledge. Yet it is to this love, on its physical side, that the English of our authorised version of the Bible applies the verb “to know,” and the etymologies of most European languages emphasise the connection here suggested. And the experience of life brings out the truth at which language hints, that selective love is so much more penetrating than any other as to be separated from it by something like the division which separates the knowledge of persons from the knowledge of things.

The attraction within antithesis.

If the antithetic love is recognised as Knowledge, may we not say that Knowledge itself finds its focus in Faith? Knowledge, not Science. If words are to keep any definite meaning, Science must be retained for communicable certainty—that is, for demonstrable truth. The endeavour to make it cover *all* truth would, if successful, necessitate the discovery of some other word to express what we now mean by Science. If it be objected that Science is merely the Latin for Knowledge we shall reply that nothing more indicates a different shade of meaning than the fact that we turn for our synonym to a foreign tongue. If we are reminded that the foundations of Mathematics are not demonstrable, we shall answer that neither are they scientific, they belong to Philosophy. If, on the other hand, an attempt is made on behalf of Psychology and Theology to introduce a kind of knowledge which has to be satisfied without proof, we shall point out that these are, as has been said, shadow sciences, the outline of a solid reduced to two dimensions. Like all shadows where the light

is strong and simple—sunlight, not mere daylight—they are more distinct than the objects which cast them. But they are shadows still, changing with the unceasing progress of the luminary, and in that very change revealing more of the form of the object, but never bringing the observer in contact with that which they represent. That is possible only for the faculty which attains an incommunicable certainty. We may know something about man by Psychology, but it is as true of our fellow-man as of God that we can know him fully by Faith, and by Faith alone.

Ultimate  
antagon-  
ism.

In any sense in which Truth can be antagonist to Truth, these principles are antagonistic. The spirit which declares, "This exists, that happened," is separated from the spirit which commands, "Thus do, thus be," not (as often supposed) by misunderstanding, but by understanding. The week of creation was an illegitimate dogma of Theology, not because it was bad Science, but because it *was* Science. It was a statement which demanded evidence transferable from one mind to another, and it produced none. The claim on Theology for evidence intelligible to Science is illegitimate for an analogous reason. It demands that a foreign power shall speak its own language and accept its own code.

The  
bitterest  
strife is  
between  
kindred.

The struggle most familiar to human beings is not that of love with hate, of the true with the false, of the high with the low. It is that of duty with duty, of the love of one with the love of all, of love itself with truth. To be on one's guard against Error is the smaller part of our battle here. It is a more urgent necessity for every aspiring soul to turn a deaf ear to unseasonable Truth. For mortal ears Truth is rhythmic, and on the lips of its highest representative the listening ear will continually hear the warning, "My time is not yet come."

Expansive-  
ness a  
modern  
virtue.

The rhythm of our evolution is on so vast a scale that the ideals of our time are still moulded by the recoil from the selective spirit. At first, and for long, it seems as though a recoil supplied a goal. The current which bears us far

from all that savours of Privilege still seems to bear us towards some aim common to humanity. The emphatic decisions of human beings are negative. The fall of the Bastille is an era to those who hardly know what the Bastille was; but if we ask what erection should be raised on its ruins, we should substitute dividing criticism for uniting enthusiasm. Men never rush to build as they rush to demolish. Destruction is easy and dramatic. Construction is difficult and tedious. But we cannot dwell among ruins; our ultimate aim must be constructive, and construction always substitutes Unity for Plurality. If it be possible to sum up in a single sentence the process of Moral Evolution, we may describe it as a sense of successively overcome incompleteness. Man is incomplete apart from the Family; he is incomplete apart from the Nation; he is, some think, incomplete apart from an association, with many forms and many names, which we mostly know as the Church. The question for our time is,—Does this sense of incompleteness grow or diminish as Man rises towards the summits of humanity? As his elevation increases and his horizon widens, is he more, or less sensible of aims out of scale with power, endowments out of scale with opportunity? As he is more and more enriched by human sympathy, is he more, or less conscious of the need for that sympathy which is Divine?

Selective-  
ness a  
modern  
need.





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